SAYINGS AND DOINGS;

OR

SKETCHES FROM LIFE.

THIRD SERIES.

Full of *wise saws* and *modern instances.*
SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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GERVASE SKINNER,

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER I.

Love rules the COURT.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

It would be vain to attempt to describe the agitation of my hero, when he set forth upon his pilgrimage to the "bower of his love." That he really *was* attached to her, and in a particular way, nobody can doubt; although scarce any body would believe, if they were not fully aware of the lady's manœuvrings, and the gentleman's easiness of character, that such a person could so soon have fallen into a snare which a commonly experienced man would have looked at and laughed at, unhurt and unmoved except by the fun and downright absurdity of

the conduct which the *fowler* exhibited: but poor Skinner had not studied female character deeply: he saw the gaze, and heard the sigh which the well trained actress chose for her own ends to bestow upon him, and he mistook them for the look of affection and the breathings of love of which he had read when he was young, and dreamt when he grew older: indeed, there was a feeling in his breast about this affair, which if common sense had contributed its due share to his calculations might never have been excited, but which self-love and the vanity common to Strephons of forty-five not unfrequently engender, with combined pride and pleasure. To have won such an accomplished creature as Mrs. Fuggleston, was no small triumph in itself; but when he considered, that old as he was, she was his first love, the sensation of joy was exquisite. Upon what particular circumstances he bottomed this certainty of being the only man who had interested her, it might be amusing enough to inquire; but the research would I fear be unprofitable: there are little unspeakable somethings, little indescribable nothings, which a woman can convey by a look, an action, a glance, a sigh, which no human

power can collect or embody, of which no doubt some had been exhibited to Skinner in a manner to convey the idea, that *he* had first made an inroad upon her heart; added to which, my hero, as what he considered a man of the world, said to himself, "this woman cannot behave generally as she behaves to *me*, or Fuggleston would find her out."

Little did he, poor fellow, know why the match between them was made up so hastily as it was, or what were the inducements held out to Fuggleston to conclude the bargain so readily, for such it was: he had heard a high character of her from Kekewich, when he was getting money by their exertions, and he believed it; for his mind was attuned to that strain; and when Kekewich afterwards told him that Fuggleston had married her upon payment of a certain sum of money from some lordling's father, who had bidden fair to perpetuate his illustrious line by her gentle means, Skinner, who had as just an idea of theatrical affections as he had of histrionic friendships, scouted the whole history as a calumny, the bitter fruit of disappointed hopes and professional irritation.

In short, Skinner was brought to a point, the

most delicate for such a man in the world: he admired a dashing sort of woman, and fancied himself admired by *her:* he took it into his head that she was not happy with her husband, and he pitied her, and pity is a kin to love; and he liked to enjoy not only her society, but her social talents of "doing" nice things for supper after the play; and moreover, he had lent her fifty pounds; and I suspect beyond and above every thing else, that fact principally led him to pursue the acquaintance with the ardor which he had evinced.

But ardent as he was, he was also shy, and as he proceeded towards the shady blest retreat which harboured Mrs. Amelrosa Fuggleston, he felt, like Acres, all his courage oozing out of his fingers-ends, and having at length ascertained the locality of the embouchure of Martlett-court, where it yields its tributary stream to Little Russell-street, Drury-lane, he entered the dark and gloomy passage close to the once frequented box-office of the theatre, formerly the empire of the well known and accommodating Fosbrook, now no more, (who had the honour of appearing on horseback in a long black cloak in the funeral procession of the

immortal Garrick amongst all the peers of the realm, associated with the play-house carpenter, and riding before Mr. Garrick's state coach in the melancholy train); and as he passed through the vaulted space and gazed upon the tranquil area before him, he felt as if he could have sunk into the earth, even through the Purbeck pavement, so powerfully did his approach to the neighbourhood of his Dulcinea act upon his nerves.

To collect his spirits, and screw his courage, as Shakspeare says, "to the sticking place," he affected to himself to forget the number of her residence, and paced the court with an affectation of inquisitiveness wholly needless, since not only did he recollect the number, but even see the exemplary female servant at the door which he had not the courage to enter. That he was speedily enlightened, who shall doubt? No sooner had Sophy set eyes upon him, than she bounced out after him, and having accosted him by his name, and declared her conviction that she knew who he was looking for, led him like another Thaïs into the house, and up the narrow stairs which led to her lady's lodging.

The drawing-room door was speedily thrown open—a green baize cloth was spread over a round table, of which the moieties did not exactly unite—there was hanging in one of the windows a smoke-dried canary bird in a dingy cage—a print of Mr. Kean in a tarnished frame was fixed over the fire-place, opposite to which stood a very small piano-forte, covered like the table with green baize—against the wall over the instrument was what is called a mirror, a little convex piece of glass in a gilt frame, balled all round, (three balls absent) with two branches for candles, one broken off. The chairs were old and large, with spreading backs and horse hair bottoms,—a once fine work-table with a sky-blue silk bag very much stained, the top open, and the lock broken off, graced what appeared to be the side of the apartment honoured by the lady's favour; and a short horse-hair sopha with an upright back, and two polished pillows seemed to be the seat on which she loved to sit: there was, moreover, a threadbare rug before the fire, with a dirty white cat asleep upon it, around the neck of which was tied a still dirtier piece of pink ribbon; the Morning Chronicle of the preceding day stained with sundry circles of either

punch or porter, lay upon the rough baize of the table, together with an insulated ink-bottle, a few wafers in a piece of whity brown paper, and a papier maché snuff-box, value one shilling.

The atmosphere of the room was close, and there was in the apartment a smell of London smoke generally, and of Fuggleston dust and dirt particularly, together with a savour of last night's onions and tobacco; but Love is blind: and though in natural history it is believed, that the absence of any one of the senses increases the delicacy and power of those which are retained, it should seem that Skinner's nose like Skinner's eyes was insensible to the little imperfections of the domicile of his beloved.

After waiting a considerable time, during which there occurred many whisperings and hasty shuttings and openings of the door of the adjoining room, to which, as it turned out, Mrs. Fuggleston had retired on the first alarm of company "to put on her things," and in which she now was actually engaged in decorating her person for conquest, by slipping on a smart pelisse over the less presentable parts of her drapery, and by disentangling from their paper cases those jetty ringlets which had so often

caught the hearts of provincial beaux, and which were now destined to ensnare that of my honest friend Gervase.

As Skinner sate and pondered on the approaching interview, it appeared clearly evident to him that the head of the family was absent: indeed, a sort of dressing-gown made of unwashable Bath coating, which hung over the back of a chair, and a shaving-pot half full of soapy water, which stood upon its proper rag just within the rusty steel fender, and a huge kettle which rested on the "hob," the colour of which rendered it completely obnoxious to any remark upon its appearance which the impertinent pot might have thought proper to make, proclaimed that Fuggleston had dressed: his domestic slippers, too, conjugally reposed upon the hearth: all indicated that his friend had since breakfast returned to complete the operation of "adonizing," which he had only half and hastily performed, when he rose, in order that he might as early as possible have the pleasure of waiting upon his patron at Hatchett's, and had again sallied forth. Skinner's agitation increased with this discovery, for although a *tête-à-tête* with his fair one was of course highly desirable, yet his natural

rusticity and timorous disposition took alarm at what he could not fail to wish for, and the next ten minutes were occupied in deliberating with himself what manner of salutation he should proffer, scrupulously anxious so to shape his behaviour as to steer equally clear of the Scylla and Charybdis of society—the appearance of vulgar forwardness, or the imputation of unworldly bashfulness.

At length the trial came, and Mrs. Fuggleston made her appearance: the doubts and difficulties of my hero were all dispelled by the ardent manner in which the fair one ran to meet and greet him. She yielded her hand even before it was sought, and rewarded its owner with a squeeze of friendship, sufficiently hearty and unequivocal to bring tears into the eyes of the unsophisticated bachelor,—whether by the force of mental pleasure, or bodily pain, bachelors who are occasionally subject to flying gout will best determine.

"Oh, Mr. Skinner," said the lady, "how kind it is of you to call; how delighted I am to see you; and yet how can I look at you with anything like composure, owing you such a debt of gratitude as we do?"

"Pray don't mention it, Ma'am," said Skinner, dropping his hat at the moment, in an effort to recover his stick which had tumbled down the moment before: "I am most happy to have been of any use, and I beg you will not say anything about it till it is quite convenient."

"My husband breakfasted with you I believe," said the lady.

"He did," said Skinner; "and I expect him to dine with me."

"I shall be quite angry with you," continued she, "if you take him away from me in that manner, and he is a naughty creature to play truant; but I know he delights in your society, and therefore as I cannot find fault with his taste, I ought not to be vexed at his indulging himself: there is one sad thing I have to mention to you, which is the accident to the carriage—he told you of it—didn't he?"

"I heard something of it," said Skinner, who in his way to Martlett-court, had been to Long Acre and *seen it.*

"What to do I don't know," said Mrs. Fuggleston, "for it was all *my* fault; but Mr. F. is really, at times, what with vexation, and worry, and one thing or another, so cross, that

I am afraid always to tell him the truth—but *I* am the culprit, and will you forgive me?"

"Forgive *you*," said Skinner: "the only favour *I* ask, is never to allude to the subject again. I have given orders about it, and it will be all set to rights in a day or two."

"Is *that* the only favour?" said Amelrosa, with a look quite indescribable. "Well you *are* a moderate creature, indeed, considering how I am indebted to you."

The unromantic mind of Skinner in an instant reverted to the cheque for fifty pounds; but that of Amelrosa was filled with other and far different matters.

"You have not made your appearance at old Drury yet," said Skinner: "I was quite surprised—I——"

"Oh no, there is nothing surprising under the sun, Sir," said the lady. "I stipulated for a certain cast of characters when I came; and on my arrival I found two other ladies in possession of them, although I sent my list up before I accepted the offer; and to my great surprise I discovered that the present manager does not choose to take all the 'blind bargains,' as he calls them, of his predecessor: indeed he carries

himself rather high towards us, and, as I think, has not a proper respect for the profession: however, I am to have a trial."

"But in the mean time——?" said Skinner.

"We are obliged to rub on as well as we can," said the lady. "Living in London is cheaper than living any where else in England without a great establishment; we contrive to do as well as our neighbours, and if you will honour us with a visit, all Mr. F. can do to make you welcome he will; and all *I* can do to make you comfortable you may depend upon."

"You must find a vast change in the mode of living," said Skinner, casting his eyes around, "in this confined situation compared with the country: the want of sun and air I should think likely to injure so delicate a constitution as yours."

"Why," replied the lady, "I don't know: whenever the sun *does* shine, we see the reflection of it against that chimney over the way, from half past ten till near one; and as for air, there is a beautiful draft through the passage at the end of the court, and when the spring comes and the mignionette pots are put in the windows, and the dear canary bird is hung out, we shall

be quite gay: to be sure there are delights in the country not attainable here, the moonlight strolls, the feathered songsters, and the delicious clouted cream—there's a sentiment about the country which to a susceptible heart is certainly exciting."

A knocking not over gentle at the door, interrupted the fair lady's speech.

"Who's there?" said she.

The door opened and presented to view a short, scrubby, dirty faced pot-boy, without a hat, but having in his hand a pint of Whitbread's entire.

"Your dinner beer, Ma'am," said the lad.

"Beer," said Mrs. Fuggleston, "there's some mistake; call the servant; I——"

"There's no mistake," said the boy: "its the time as you always has it, half past two, your young ooman's out, so I brought it up myself," saying which he put the pint of porter on the piano forte, and advancing towards the centre of the room, said "two pence ha'penny, please, Ma'am."

"I know nothing about it," said Mrs. Fuggleston, "I—the servant will settle."

"Master never trusts," said the boy: "he

has been done twice afore by lodgers in this here house. I can't leave the beer without the money."

"You see how we live now," said Mrs. Fuggleston to the squire, colouring like crimson, and doing facetious, as well as she possibly could, "——when we are at Rome, we must do as Rome does."

"He! He! He!" said the boy; "that's true enough."

In the midst of which jocose colloquy, the fair lady put her delicate fingers into an ornamental piece of china, which graced the centre of the chimney piece, and groped out five excellent halfpence; but pausing affectedly as if she did not know what number of such vulgar coins was necessary to compose the sum required, the boy good naturedly wishing to save trouble, and thinking she was calculating the price of the commodity, said—

"Two pence halfpenny this is, Ma'am, because its half and half, as your young ooman ordered."

The boy was paid, and being so, was civility itself, and having inquired whether Mrs. Fuggleston would like "her supper beer at nine as

usual," took his leave, and stumped down stairs to the infinite delight of his fair customer, and to the great relief of her astonished visiter.

The descent of this harpy relieved the gentle mind of the fair Amelrosa, who, with her natural quickness, could not fail to perceive the effect produced upon the mind of him, with whom she desired to stand so particularly well, by the dirty urchin's unrequired appearance in the "presence."

"These," said Amelrosa, "are the sort of inconveniences to which our mode of living subjects us, Mr. Skinner; but better days may come: and if success should crown our efforts, we may perhaps enjoy such comforts as are common to the leaders of our profession: friendship and patronage are what we want; for let merit be what it may, without aid, it can never rise in the metropolis."

At this moment a double knock at the street door, announced a visitor; after a short pause, Sophy made her appearance.

"Mr. Dilton, Ma'am," said the girl.

"Stop one moment," cried the lady, "desire Mr. Dilton to walk up;" saying which she rushed to a sort of card-rack, in which a visit-

ing ticket had been stuck, but which by a sudden movement she snatched from its place, and slipped behind the sopha pillar, into which soft seclusion she also dextrously crammed a dirtyish roll of paper which had been lying on the chimney piece, and which a more experienced eye than Skinner's would have recognised as a MS. drama.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Dilton?" said the lady, receiving him with all her wonted cordiality.

"How d'ye do?" said the smiling dramatist, for so he was.

"Mr. Skinner of Bagsden, of whom you have heard us speak," said Mrs. Fuggleston. "Mr. Skinner, allow me to introduce Mr. Dilton, the author of the successful new farce of 'Prawns and Potatos,' now acting with universal applause at Covent Garden."

"It *has* been very fortunate," said Dilton affecting to blush, "owing entirely to the acting: the name was a lucky hit."

"It always makes my mouth water," said the lady.

"I hope," said Dilton, "we may do something as good for the other house. I'm sure I shall be admirably supported."

Mrs. Fuggleston smiled.

"Where is Fuggleston?" said Dilton.

"He is gone out of town," said Mrs. Fuggleston; "and doesn't return I believe until late to-morrow."

This statement, delivered with the most perfect coolness, startled Skinner, who delighted at the idea of being released from the tax of his company at dinner, was about to question the lady, when a look which even *he* understood, gave him to understand that she had a reason for fibbing.

"He does not dine at the Red Herring Club then?" said Dilton.

"No," said the lady, "he cannot be in two places at once."

"Pray," said Dilton, "do you know whether he has received the farce Marley has written, with the part for you, which he told me Marley wished him to read?"

"No," said the lady, "I am quite sure he has not—indeed, Mr. Marley is no favourite of his, nor of mine either: I cannot endure people who are both affected and conceited, without talent sufficient to justify their coxcombry."

"I think him an absolute bore," said Dilton; "but he doesn't think himself so. Ha! ha! ha!"

Skinner heard this too, and recollecting the name of Marley to be that which he had seen graven on the visiting ticket which had been so suddenly displaced, and evidently connected with the roll of paper which had been so dextrously concealed, was a good deal staggered at what he perceived going on.

"However, I'll not intrude," said Dilton, "for I have a hundred things to do. I should like to see Fuggleston, or perhaps you would allow me just to say one word——"

Skinner instantly felt that he ought to terminate his visit—his sense of propriety in the first place, and his anxiety to escape before Mrs. Fuggleston was reduced to the necessity of explaining all her little manœuvres, in the second, induced him to grasp his hat and cane.

"I'll wish you a good morning," said the shy rustic. "I shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"Oh, don't go," said Mrs. Fuggleston; "you really tantalize one with your visits, they are so short."

"I hope I don't——" said Dilton, meaning to express a wish not to break up the *tête-à-tête* which he had accidentally broken in upon; but a particular look from the lady gave *him* in his turn to understand that she hoped he would; and so Skinner having received the affectionate squeeze which the sensitive dame bestowed, bowed to the new arrival and departed—the door was closed.

"Do ring the bell, Mr. Dilton," said the lady, "for Sophy to let him out. Oh, I was so thankful when you came in, I knew he would be obliged to go—there never was any thing like him."

"Always excepting your husband's imitation of him," said Dilton: "that's perfect—the shuffle, and the hem, and the bow—I should have known him any where."

"Yes," said Mrs. Fuggleston, "we often wish he would die, for he would make a capital hit in a farce; but one can't do it while he is alive, and so civil to us."

It would not conduce to the development either of my story or the characters concerned in it, to detail the conversation which took place between the dramatist and the heroine: he had

undertaken to write a farce in which she was to figure conspicuously, and so had Mr. Marly, who was the particular friend of the Fuggle-stons, but the bitter enemy of Dilton; thus it became necessary to keep the latter in the dark as to the competition which was going on, and above all, as to the intimacy which actually existed between the former and the Fugglestons: hence the activity and promptitude with which his name and writings disappeared upon the entrance of his unconscious rival, and hence the declaration that Fuggleston had gone out of town, which was to give him an opportunity not only of shirking a dinner, for which he would have had to pay, but of reading over Marley's farce before he read Dilton's, which was to be ready for perusal on the following day.

Leaving therefore the worldly pair to arrange their business in Martlett-court, we will proceed to the White Horse Cellar, where Fuggleston had arrived before his friend, and taken advantage of possession to order dinner, which the said friend had omitted to do.

Upon the return of Skinner his first inquiries were made after his writing-desk, and then after

Fuggleston, whom he found installed in the same box as had served his purpose in the morning. The writing-desk, however, remained unheard of, notwithstanding that every paper had published the advertisement offering the reward for its recovery, and the master of the house expressed an earnest and confident hope of its eventual restoration to its right owner.

Punctual as a tax-gatherer came the senior waiter, followed by the different grades of attendants, bringing in the dinner: he that led, carried soup, the fish-bearer grazed his heels, the sauce-tureens came next in order; while the vegetables and other adjuncts brought up the rear.

Skinner eyed the procession with the anxiety of Scotia's king.

> "Another yet—a seventh—I'll see no more;
> And yet the eighth appears, who bears a *glass!*"

All of which was true to the letter—But assuredly the horrified Macbeth, himself, when the heart-grieving "vision glared upon his sight," did not feel more agony or *mystification* than my hero, who had ordered literally "beef steaks for two," when he found the repast lengthened out

with all sorts of delicacies, which had been ordered by his *hospitable* friend Fuggleston, when he called expressly for that purpose about three o'clock in the afternoon.

It was in vain that Skinner looked enquiringly. Fuggleston saw his astonishment, and enlightened him accordingly by confessing the part he had played towards the improvement of the feast; which confession he made in a tone of so much decision and importance, that Gervase became satisfied that he intended to give the dinner, and accordingly ate and drank of all that Fuggleston called for, with the most complacent readiness; not but had he waited to consider, which in his zeal for economy he rarely did, he would have recollected that, by his own servant's showing, Fuggleston had no means of paying for the banquet but what he himself had furnished him with.

Let all the characteristics of an Englishman be doubted but one, and that is his after-dinner kindness: eating so sweetens the British temper, so softens the asperities of John Bull, and so opens his heart, that a stranger would be puzzled to recognize the man *after* to whom he had been introduced but just before that im-

portant meal. As the wine flowed, so flowed the easy conversation of the wag and his victim, until past eight o'clock, when a visitor arrived, inquiring for Mr. Gervase Skinner.

"My writing-desk is found no doubt," said Skinner: "who is the person?"

"A police officer, he says, Sir," replied the waiter.

"Better and better; stopped, detected, and will be returned," cried Skinner: "send him in."

Accordingly the instrument of justice entered. "Mr. Gervase Skinner, I believe, Sir," said the man, touching but not removing his glazed hat.

"*My* name is Skinner," said the Lord of Bagsden Parva: "you are come about the desk, I suppose."

"No, Sir," said the man, "I'm come about 387."

"Three hundred and eighty-seven desks," cried Fuggleston.

"I know nothing about desks," said the man. "I've got a summons against Mr. Gervase Skinner."

"A summons, Sir," said Skinner, "what summons?"

"'A heavy summons lies like lead upon me, and yet I would not sleep,'"

said Fuggleston.

"There's the summons," said the man, "for not paying the driver of the hackney coach 387 his fare: it's for to-morrow, Sir."

"And what must I do?" said Skinner.

"Please to be at Bow-street at eleven, Sir," said the officer, and, leaving the agreeable document upon the table, he walked out.

Skinner, whose knowledge of law proceedings was, happily for himself, very small, was considerably annoyed by the appearance of this monition, and he turned over the last proof of his frugality with an anxiety much greater than the circumstances perhaps required. Nothing, however, would calm his apprehensions until he had communed with the landlord, who explained the nature of the proceeding, and concluded his elucidation by laying it down as a rule that it was better to suffer one's self to be imposed upon a little, than lie under the liability of such

worries as that which Mr. Skinner had just brought upon himself.

Fuggleston considered the discussion somewhat dry, and suggested, "another bottle," to which Gervase most readily assented; and thus these worthies washed away time until the actor proposed a stroll through town; that is to say, down St. James's-street and Pall Mall to the corner of Waterloo-place and back again; which proposition met the concurrence of Skinner, and out they strolled, and during their stroll, which ended, instead of at Waterloo-place, in Martlett-court, Fuggleston expressed his sovereign contempt for the character, intellect, principles and morality of Marley, whose card Skinner had seen at his house in the morning, and who at the conclusion of their walk, they found playing cribbage with Mrs. Fuggleston at his lodgings.

Here Fuggleston having warmly and kindly received the said Marley, and expressed his unbounded gratitude to him for coming and seeing Mrs. F., introduced him to Skinner as a particular friend, and having made a few preliminary inquiries of his lady, suggested some

kidneys and brandy and water as a wind up of the evening.

"Oh," said Skinner, "we shall give so much trouble."

"None in the least," said the lady: "they shall be done in a quarter of an hour."

"To be sure," cried Fuggleston—

'These domestic and particular *broils* are not to question here.'"

And accordingly brandy having been procured from the nearest wine vaults, and spring water from the pump, so eulogized before, a repast was prepared which was exceedingly well received by the dramatist and the lady, and endured by Skinner, who needed no supper, but who, spell-bound by Mrs. Fuggleston's eyes, remained looking and sipping his cold grog until one o'clock in the morning, at which early hour he was dismissed into the street under a heavy rain, to paddle his way up to Piccadilly, his clothes saturated with wet to save one shilling's-worth of coach-hire, the dinner-bill of the day to pay, and the summons of the morrow to attend to.

The reader will begin to perceive that, which

Skinner did not, the disadvantages of misapplied economy; of that frugality which amounts to meanness, and of that prudence which approximates to selfishness; and well would it have been for Mr. Gervase Skinner if the few unimportant events which have already come to light had opened his eyes. It was fated otherwise, and as the measure of his "*woe*" is incomplete, I will not anticipate, but promise the reader to see it filled, drop by drop, until it actually overflows.

CHAPTER II.

Compare the picture, and you'll find
He'll *change his note* to-morrow.

T. DIBDIN.

It might tire my reader to detail the proceedings before the magistrate, at the Police Office, which ended in the establishment of the coachman's right to the payment he demanded, and the consequent defeat of Skinner, who had to pay costs and expenses, the man's time, and the loss of his own, amounting somewhere to forty-one times the amount of the sixpence, for which he so prudently haggled "upon principle." I shall therefore pass over this minor defeat of his "ruling passion," and come to the more important fact of the recovery of his writing-desk, which it must not be forgotten, he lost, merely by affronting the guard with a

refusal of remuneration for his trouble in having taken care of it.

"Viva! then," cried Skinner, on the following morning, as he saw the well known desk, standing in all its original entirety upon his table; unbroken, unmutilated, unopened. He bounded, rather than ran, to the restored object of his affections, and as he successfully tried his Bramah key in the uninjured lock, every thing, not excepting Amelrosa herself, fled from his mind.

Who shall paint the delight with which he hastily turned over the various familiar papers with which it was stored, or the joy with which he beheld, safely reposing in the midst of them, all blooming and over due, the much loved acceptance of Messrs. Hobbs, Stobbs, Bumble, and Davis.

The recovery of this treasure soothed him for all minor cares, and he paid the expenses of advertising, the reward, and all the incidental charges of recovering the desk, (which had been re-conveyed to Bath by *accident*,) amounting to upwards of eleven pounds, without a sigh, because he had saved his property; although had he spared one hundredth part of the same sum, to have saved all the rest, it would have cost

him a pang, which his economical heart could not endure. So much for his principle.

To whom should the announcement of this happy event first be made, but to Mrs. Fuggleston; to her who was the sharer of all his minor feelings, and in whose presence, he seemed destined entirely to exist; for it may not be uninteresting to my reader to know, that having actually paid his bill at the coffee-house, my hero had discovered, that although very reasonable in the abstract, dinners, breakfasts, suppers, soda water, sandwiches, and all the etceteras, in which his friend, the actor, was by no means backward in indulging, cost money, and it occurred to him, that by shifting his quarters to the Old Hummums, where there is neither coffee-room nor any other facility for "feeding;" and living a good deal with his friends in Martlett-court, he might avoid the expense of entertaining and *eat out* his fifty pounds, the recovery of which he deemed otherwise hopeless.

To describe the shufflings and manœuvrings of his friends, to avoid this arrangement, would occupy more time, than the subject demands; suffice it to say, that a bed room was procured for him at the Hummums, and that regular as the tides, the sun, the moon, or any

other great "periodical," Mr. Gervase Skinner, from the day he recovered his desk, and paid his bill at the White Horse Cellar, appeared, to breakfast at the Fugglestons, battle with them for dinner, spare them at tea, but inevitably fix them at supper, a meal in which the mimes delighted, and in which the squire participated with the greatest sociability.

Let it be impressed upon the mind of the reader, that although affection for the lady had something to do with this, economy was the true motive, and the desire of getting back in kind, what he had advanced in money.

But whatever motives Skinner might have had for the prudent line of conduct he thus adopted, an event was shortly to occur, which while it might render his parsimony more venial, was destined to excite the bitterest feelings on *his* part, and the tenderest sympathies on the part of the fair dame.

My reader, I hope, does not forget the bill, the bill for twelve hundred and thirty pounds, drawn on Messrs. Hobbs, Stobbs, Bumble, and Davis. On the Friday morning, after its restoration in the desk, away went Skinner, post haste, to get his money. Certain portions of the

amount were already *mentally* appropriated to certain purposes, and he was calculating and contriving other divisions and subdivisions, as he travelled with all the activity of a man who really *has* business in the city, through the motley crowds of Cheapside and Cornhill. He felt the importance of his mission to himself; and with his twelve hundred and thirty pounds safe in his pocket, jostled crowds of men, who lose or gain in a morning, more than the fee simple of all his estates, and the total amount of all his funded property.

At length he reached the house, whence was to flow his anticipated treasure: the shutters were still up—Skinner looked at his watch; it was long past noon. As he approached the door, he saw two or three persons grouped together, muttering amongst themselves, the words—"dreadful affair"—"more than half a million"—"ruin to so many families"—"others must stop"—the word stop, stopped Skinner, who almost dreading an answer, said, "What has stopped, Sir?"

"Why the house of Hobbs, Stobbs, Bumble and Davis," said a man with a large black book full of bills and cheques in his hand, "and

such a smash has not been known in the city for many a day: a week ago their names were worth a million."

"A week ago," said Skinner—stupified—"a million. When will they pay again, Sir?"

"Next never-come-tide," said a butcher's boy, who happened to be passing with a tray on his shoulder.

"But they must pay *me*," thought Skinner; "my bill was due last Monday; they had not stopped then: so *I'm* safe at all events." And accordingly my hero, having seen one or two persons admitted to the house, proceeded to give an authoritative knock at the door, which was immediately opened—

"Can I speak to any of the partners, Sir?" said Skinner, to the porter.

"Yes, Sir," said the man, "the gentlemen are all backward." There was already sufficient evidence of this fact.

Skinner proceeded to the back parlour, where he immediately recognized Mr. Bumble, to whom he had confided the loss of his desk, earlier in the week, with instructions to stop the bill, if presented; and upon the strength of their former conversation, he addressed himself

to this gentleman, so soon as he had concluded a dialogue, in which he was engaged with a creditor to a large amount. His elastic mind, however, had been so extended in the discussion of a question involving hundreds of thousands, that when Skinner drew forth from his pocket-book, much as Sylvester Daggerwood extracts the announcements of his benefit, *the* individual long narrow slip of paper addressed to the House, and by them accepted, Mr. Bumble could hardly contract his faculties to the consideration of so small an amount.

Unlike Sylvester Daggerwood, however, poor Skinner had the bill, without the benefit; for as soon as, by the aid of spectacles, and a little exercise of recollection, Mr. Bumble could satisfactorily to himself examine the document, he shook his head, and said how very sorry he was for the unfortunate event, which had plunged the house into those difficulties, in which they were just then involved, and how particularly sorry he was, that he could do nothing to relieve Mr. Skinner or the drawer of the bill, for whom personally he and his partners had the highest respect and esteem.

"Nothing to relieve us, Sir!" exclaimed

Skinner, "why you mean to pay the bill, don't you?"

"Eventually, we hope to pay every body," said Mr. Bumble; "but at present, the thing is impossible: we are, as perhaps you know, insolvent, and our affairs are no longer in our own hands."

"Yes, Sir," said Skinner, "but you were not insolvent last Monday, when this bill became due."

"Certainly not, Sir," replied the banker; "and if the bill had been presented when it came due, it would as certainly have been paid; but—"

"Well, but, Sir," said Skinner, "I came here myself, and mentioned the fact of my writing desk having been stolen or carried off, and I told you to stop the bill, if presented, which are proofs that I——"

"—— had not the bill to present," interrupted the banker: "if it had been presented, it would have been after your notice stopped; if you had presented it yourself, or had it been presented by your order, it would have been paid; but as it was not presented, I am sorry to say, (and the rest of the creditors will of course take every favourable advantage for increasing the dividend,) we are legally exonerated from the

claim as far as the priority of payment goes. If this were a personal transaction of my own, or if we were not, as I before said, completely in the hands of others, who are bound to administer the estate impartially, I should of course waive such a laches; but as we are situated, I am sorry to say, I fear you will be unable to recover more of the sum upon the bill in question, than the general dividend may produce."

A fillip from the pen, which was poised horizontally behind the banker's right ear, would have felled Mr. Gervase Skinner to the earth.

"But, Sir," said Skinner, who having received much enlightenment upon the law of bills of exchange from his new friend, endeavoured to obtain a little more which might prove more agreeable and useful to him in his difficulties—"But, Sir, I suppose Mr. Tubbs, of Bristol, the drawer of the bill, will reimburse me."

"Why, in equity of course he should," said Bumble; "but I fear, even if he have the will, he will hardly possess the means; for *his* house has unfortunately stopped in consequence of our inevitable misfortune."

The situation of poor Skinner, that lover of gold, and manager "upon principle," may

better be conceived than described; and yet he saw not that his whole loss originated in the little parsimony which deprived him of his desk. His thoughts took another turn, and as he moped his way back through the shady small streets of the city, yielding passively to the impetuous pushings and careless thrustings of men whose bankers had not stopped, his whole mind was filled with the criminality of conduct in those who, trusted with the property of others, live in splendour and extravagance upon the savings of their customers, until the day of reckoning comes, and hundreds are involved in the ruin which a few profligates have caused.

Surely some law should be enacted to render criminal, conduct founded upon no principle, extravagance justified by no actual possession. Men who thus exhibit themselves in all the splendour of wealth entrusted to their care, ought to feel conscious that they have no right to the display; but it seems they do not. They hold the money paid into their hands to be their own the moment they receive it, making themselves only responsible for a like sum to those who trust them. Ambition, thirst of money, love of gaiety, desire

for notoriety, any or all of these may lead the actual possessors of the hard-earned means of others, to risk or waste what habit and the customs of mercantile society have taught them to believe their own. But while such a mistaken view of the real ownership is avowedly taken, some stronger check should be imposed upon the conduct of the banker than the mere restrictions which his conscience may present to it. The stoppage of a banking-house should affect its partners, differently from a common bankruptcy, where the merchant, trading upon his own means, must first lose his own property before he endangers that of his creditors; which creditors, if on the one hand they lose by *him*, may on the other gain by a different individual. The banker who fails, stands differently with *his* creditors: what *they* lose by *him*, are not the mere fluctuations of trade, to be placed on the debit side of an account, in which may flourish a larger credit from some other quarter. It is, after all that process has been performed with toil and trouble; it is, after the profits are actually secured, and the very means and *fond* upon which new profits may

accrue are acquired, that they are placed for security, and not for the purposes of speculation —in the hands of the banker.

The banker adopts this treasure as his own for his own aggrandizement, for his own advantage; when, therefore, either through extravagance, or wantonness of enterprise, or over exertion of means, he loses that, which in fact he has no right, but that of custom, to employ, he surely becomes, or rather ought to become—criminal.

Thus thought Mr. Gervase Skinner; and if his be called a narrow view of the subject, the reader will perhaps just take the trouble to put himself into his situation, and recollect that with the horrid vision of his dishonoured bill, there came floating into Mr. Skinner's mind the long and varied accounts of splendid balls, *dejeûnés à la fourchette,* contested elections, purchased mansions, military promotions, cellars of wines, studs of horses, hounds and racers, plate and pictures, with which the newspapers had for years been teeming as attributes of the spirit, taste, judgment, munificence, hospitality, and good fortune of the different members of the now bankrupt firm of Hobbs, Stobbs, Bumble, and Davis.

In the confusion of ideas so natural to Mr. Skinner's irritating position, he overlooked the vast accommodation to society which bankers afford. The general excellence and stability of their various houses, and the rare occurrence of such an event, so originating, as he pictured to himself, by comparing the accounts in the newspapers with those in the banking-house in question. In the individual case in which he suffered, not only was his violence natural, but his reprobation well grounded, and he was not in the humour to make exceptions in favour of the numerous highly honourable establishments by which commerce is upheld, the spirit of industry stimulated, and the pecuniary transactions of society generally simplified and facilitated.

The reader may perhaps be surprised when he hears that the sensations experienced by my hero on the positive loss of his twelve hundred and thirty pounds, were not rendered less powerful by the consciousness that he possessed another bill drawn on another London house by the same individual at Bristol, whose failure had been so unexpectedly announced to him in the City; another bill not yet arrived at maturity was in the writing desk for an amount of something

like two hundred and fifty pounds. And here it may not be useless, as a stronger illustration of Skinner's character, to account for the mode in which he, a private individual, a squire of Somersetshire, and a retired country gentleman, had become possessed of these mercantile chattels. The truth is, that he had been recommended to discount the bills for the Bristol bankrupt, which he did at what might harshly be termed an usurious rate, just for the sake of making some seven or eight per cent. of his loose cash, instead of four or five which he might have legally, securely, and indisputably obtained from the public funds; but he always made the most of his money "upon principle."

The moment he collected his scattered ideas, he resolved if possible to secure the other bill; or, at least, give himself a chance of its being paid, by passing it from his own hands as speedily as possible; for although the house upon which this second bill was drawn, and by which it had been accepted, was perfectly good, sound, and solvent, Skinner did not feel quite sure that it might not eventually be affected by Mr. Tubbs's "sinking in the west." How to dispose of the

tender security, so as to convert it into a golden certainty, was the point uppermost in his mind, and the first efforts of his genius were directed to the desired end.

He cast about for some time to consider in what manner he could effect this grand operation, and at last hit upon a plan which he considered, certain of success:—his primary proceeding was to get the bill from its hiding place, and the second to apply to a stock-broker, whom he knew, and who was also a lottery-office keeper, to discount it; for, as he observed to himself, it had not above twelve or fourteen days to run, and the charge of discounting it could not be very great. The stock-broker having considered and consulted some colleagues upon the goodness of the bill, pronounced the drawer insolvent; but added, that the recommendation of Mr. Skinner's name, and the desire he had to accommodate him, would, as he had no reason to doubt the stability of the acceptors, induce him to do what Mr. Skinner wished, if he had no objection to taking a whole lottery ticket as part of the amount.

To buy a lottery ticket was, in Mr. Skinner's mind, to throw away seven or eight and twenty

pounds, and "upon principle," he set his face against lotteries. However, he argued, and justly too, that he could sell the ticket again if he did not choose to risk its eventual success; and therefore poising the trifling inconvenience of the intended arrangement with the dread and apprehension of losing the whole of his two or three hundred pounds by the smash of the acceptors, he gladly acceded to the proposition, and received the amount of his bill in Bank of England notes, short the discount, and twenty-six pounds two shillings, being the price of a whole ticket in the state lottery; and with this precious burthen, having the recollection of the failure of Messrs. Hobbs, Stobbs, Bumble, and Davis, strong in his mind, and the fear of a similar occurrence elsewhere staring him in the face, he proceeded to his new quarters at the Old Hummums, and deposited all his rescued wealth in the secret drawer of his recovered writing-desk.

His social evening at the Fugglestons was occupied with all the details of his heavy loss, and he was soothed with honied words and kind looks, such as never mortal yet was blessed with, from the lips and eyes of the gentle Amelrosa,

who was actually announced for Ophelia on the following Tuesday, and was only released from the hard practice of the songs incidental to the character, to fry some tripe in batter, for the gratification of Mr. Fuggleston's dear friend, Mr. Gervase Skinner.

One day of Skinner's life, at this period of it described, his whole existence is depicted—the charm grew stronger with Mrs. Fuggleston's success at Drury-Lane; upon the strength of her attractions her husband was engaged, and constantly employed in the subordinate ranks of the drama, a circumstance which tended greatly to mature and ripen the affection which my hero felt and had confessed he felt for Amelrosa. A man cannot be in two places at once; but private individuals, who are not bound to account for their actions, may fly about, and take such rapid strides, that gallant, gay Lotharios may be taken by surprise, and become the objects of an angered husband's rage or a betrayed lover's jealousy. Not so the actor: the large bills of the theatre, stuck all over London, proclaim every day his exact position for a certain number of hours in the evening. Don Lopez or Don Guzman cannot get away

from the playhouse till the comedy is over, nor can he well slip out even into Martlett-court, during the performance, were he so disposed. The foil, the finery, the wig, the paint, the pumps, the puffs, and all the paraphernalia of mummery, prohibit the possibility of so uncivil and so uncivilized an intrusion; so that, aided by the calculations of a lady quite qualified to "time" the performances, Skinner was as secure of Fuggleston's absence from his home at a hundred yards' distance, as if he had been in the antipodes.

But Mrs. Fuggleston was not yet wholly won; she could play with a heart as a finished angler plays with a trout, up the stream and down the stream, and every now and then makes a splash to shew his dexterity to any passer-by, and looks upon the writhings of the poor creature with the bait in its mouth, as a matter of sport; and lets him out and draws him back, until the seasonable time arrives for landing him in his net. Mrs. Fuggleston's leisure at Drury Lane was just at this period not much broken in upon; the public, during the run of a splendid pantomime, sought neither for Shakspeare nor Amelrosa, and her health, visibly affected by

the process of smoke-drying which she had now undergone for several weeks, required a temporary change of air; little excursions were recommended, drives in an open carriage, if possible, which, now that the days were lengthening, would be *so* agreeable: but how could these desirable remedies be obtained? the interesting invalid having no open carriage to use, or if she had, no husband disengaged to accompany her.

The softest water will, in time, make an impression upon the hardest stone; and although Skinner, who, if susceptible about the heart, was somewhat impenetrable in the head, had unsuccessfully puzzled himself with the greatest earnestness and innocence to ascertain what Mrs. Fuggleston was actually aiming at, he at last discovered that *he* was designed to be the Phaeton, and that moreover he was looked to, to furnish the vehicle to be driven and the animals to draw it.

It was a desperate attack upon his "principle" which Amelrosa made in the ingenuous yet gradual development of her wishes and expectations upon this point; a development not made, however, without sundry indications that as the weather grew milder, these excursions

would be very agreeable indeed. What the means were which she used, what the insinuations she practised, or what the promises she held out to induce such an extraordinary variation from the usual course of Skinner's conduct, it is not possible precisely to determine; suffice it to say, that the proposal had gone to such a length that nothing remained doubtful upon my hero's mind, but how to carry it into effect most economically.

The purchase of an open carriage was no such terrible affair, since he had all along intended, on his return from his matrimonial expedition to the north, to establish such a vehicle, seeing that the Skinner would not be smart enough or small enough for the sociable *tête-à-tête* drives which he anticipated in company with his lovely Emma, upon whose small, but lady-like fortune, Mr. Gervase constantly kept his eye, although his thoughts were drawn from the charms of its present possessor by the more enticing blandishments of his theatrical Dulcinea. The purchase of a horse indeed staggered him, because he had horses enough in Somersetshire; yet those were not the sort of cattle which would serve to whisk Amelrosa about the

environs of the metropolis. Hiring he objected to, upon principle, inasmuch as that sort of disbursement was a dead loss; whereas, he calculated that by getting a cheap horse at the then present season of the year, and by getting him into good condition, which he felt, with his knowledge of horse-flesh, he should be quite able to do, he might sell him at such an advanced price at the end of the spring, as would pay for his keep during the month or six weeks he had to remain in a state of single blessedness.

To Tattersall's on the Sunday he went—nothing to suit him—saucy grooms, shewing their masters' horses, laughed in his face when he talked of their going at fifty or sixty guineas. At Aldridge's little better luck attended him, and although a remarkably well-built Stanhope, with its appropriate harness was ready for him in Long Acre—second-hand to be sure, but little the worse for wear, no suitable steed could he find, under a price much greater than he meant to afford.

Good fortune, however, which always threw bargains in his way, again favoured him, and as he was proceeding from Aldridge's, Martlett-courtwards, he was accosted by a most respect-

able-looking man, evidently a horse-dealer, who begged to know whether he had not seen the gentleman looking at some gig horses. Skinner answered in the affirmative. The man told him that if he could spare time to step to a stable near Drury-lane, he could shew him a capital horse, "a rale good un," fifteen hands and a half high, colour bright bay, four black legs, sound wind and limb, lofty action, one as could trot thirty miles in three hours, without whip, and so temperate that a lady might drive him.

"Indeed, Sir," said Skinner; "the description is perfect. I should like to look at him."

"In welcome, Sir," said the man, "I'm a going to take him to Aldridge's to-morrow, if I don't sell him afore; only if I can, why it saves charges, Sir, to get rid on him by private contract."

"Very true, Sir," said Skinner, "you, like myself, I see, act upon principle in these matters: you are quite right; what is saved in that way may be applied to some much better purposes."

"To tell you the truth, Sir," said the man, "the horse I sold to a young fly-away gemman in one of the Lancing regiments, and he could

not pay me for him, and I took the horse back with thirty pounds for the use he had of him, so I can afford to sell him at little more than half his 'rale vally.'"

The dulcet sounds of such a possibility rung in the ears of my hero, who having inquired where the horse stood, agreed to accompany his new acquaintance to the stable.

Arrived there, Mr. Skinner exhibited his veterinary science by squeezing the horse's throat, peeping into his mouth, looking at his feet, trying his eyes, and performing other experiments in order to ascertain the extent of his faults and misfortunes, and very soon satisfied himself that the horse was a remarkably fine animal, and as his present master had already said, "sound, wind, and limb;"—He only required a trial of him—granted in a minute—out came a gig luckily at hand—in went the horse—away drove Skinner through the Regent's Park, round about, and up and down, and the horse went like the wind, right a-head, straight forward, smoothly and steadily, fairly and freely, and all the people turned to look at his magnificent action. As for his temper, a flock of sheep huddled through

his legs without disturbing him; ladies with French hats flapping in the wind crossed under his very nostrils, and he started not; an explosion of Mr. Perkins's steam battery did not even move his ears; in short, nothing ever was so perfect as the horse that was soon to be the property of Mr. Gervase Skinner.

After this exhibition, came the question of price. Skinner had anticipated a long one—some hundred and eighty guineas or thereabouts—judge his delight, his rapture at hearing fifty guineas only asked for the horse, which, with the thirty paid by the young lancer, would, the honest dealer said, repay him what the horse cost him. He confessed he was in want of money, he knew the gentleman would not like to give a long sum; little profit or even his own again, was all he wished, and so he would be glad to get what he asked.

In a moment, Skinner, who was as cunning a fox as ever lived, was convinced that there was some fault about the horse which he had not yet discovered, and he recommenced all his "trials," which as before, ended most satisfactorily.

"I tell you what, my good Sir," said Skinner,

after pausing for a few moments—"the horse is mine at your price—that's settled"—saying which, he produced bank notes for the amount, with which he had armed himself, in order to make a ready money bargain;—"but," added he, "having gone so far, I honestly confess that I think the horse must have some fault, some trick which I have not detected—there's the money, and, the horse is mine—but now—that you can have no possible interest in concealing his defects, and as I buy him on purpose to drive a lady, tell me fairly where *is* the objection. Does he shy, or bolt, or kick, or——"

"Neither the one nor the other, Sir," said the man, with something like hesitation.

"Come now," said Skinner, coaxingly, "you *can* lose nothing by it—the horse is mine—let me know what the fault is, because I flatter myself I am able to correct it; only, as I said before, the horse being for a lady, you know I should like to be aware——"

"Why, Sir," said the man, "he's a cunning one—but——"

"A cunning one! how d'ye mean?" said Skinner, who was rather puzzled

"Why," said the dealer—"if you don't travel the Chipping Ongar road, it don't signify a bit"——

"Chipping Ongar," said Skinner, "not I—I scarcely know where Chipping Ongar is—I never was there in my life, nor am I ever likely to be there."

"Well, in that case, Sir," said the dealer, "the orse has'nt not no fault whatsumever."

"His fault is peculiar to that road then," said my hero.

"Exactly, Sir," said the man. "I bred him down in Essex, and for a long time I kept him at the Crown, at Chipping Ongar, and he's so used to the place, that a strange gemman, not aware of his bolting into the gateway, might perhaps be taken unawares and get into a scrape with the carriages about; but that's all, Sir, I *do* declare—the horse has not another blemish in his character."

"Then he is spotless for me," said Skinner: "the Crown at Chipping Ongar is never very likely to ruffle his spirits while *I* have him; and so I am much obliged to you for your explanation, and will thank you to let your young man take him home to my stables."

No sooner said than done; the horse removed, received at Skinner's stables, established in his stall, bedded up for the night, Skinner was again at the side of his beloved Amelrosa; to whom and to her loving spouse he imparted the purchase he had made, most carefully concealing the cheapness of the animal, upon whose beauties and merits he descanted, until Amelrosa, really delighted, began to anticipate the charming excursion of the following day, expressing, however, a wish that Mr. F. could accompany them, knowing it at the same time to be impossible in a stanhope "licensed" to carry not exceeding two inside—Fuggleston declaring that he should

> "Their quietus make with a bare *bodkin*,"

and Skinner mentally congratulating himself upon having struck, purely "upon principle," one of the best possible bargains in horse-flesh.

CHAPTER III.

> Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,
> Were never folk so glad;
> The stones did rattle underneath,
> As if Cheapside were mad.
>
> COWPER.

NOTHING could exceed the pleasure of Mrs. Fuggleston, or the gratitude of her husband, for the new proof of attention and civility just afforded them, in the purchase of the horse and stanhope by their excellent friend, Mr. Skinner; who, anxious to have full credit for the greatest possible liberality, did not strongly deny the price of the animal, when charged by Mr. Fuggleston with having given an hundred and fifty guineas for him, or explain that the stanhope was in fact, second hand, "a very little the worse for wear." He was now perfectly domesticated with the Thespians, and hugged himself to think that for the considera-

tion of a horse and chaise, which he could always sell for more than he gave for it, he had obtained board gratis, in the lodgings of his dear friends.

Skinner had been admitted to the green-room, where whenever Amelrosa played, he might be seen in attendance—hovering about the side scene when she was on the stage, and coiled up in the corner next to her, when she was not actually engaged.

The green room to Skinner was an extraordinary sight; there, instead of the hurly-burly, bustle, and inconvenience of the country theatre, he found quiet, ease, and elegance.—A handsome apartment, surrounded by ottomans, embellished with splendid mirrors, and lighted by a magnificent lustre, was appropriated for the reception of the performers. Seated on their luxurious couches, might be seen the laughing hoyden in grave debate with the sceptred monarch, and the jolly tar doling out his personal griefs into the ear of a singing match girl; and all done with a gravity and ceremony, little to be expected in such a place, filled with such company. In fact, my hero was disappointed; and the group of noble lords and distinguished indivi-

duals who clustered round the fire in serious conversation with the comedians, gave an air of business and importance to the scene, for which he was wholly unprepared.

Nothing can be more striking than to hear a lady who has just been figuring upon the stage as a coquette, or a romp, explaining to some friend, the distress she is labouring under in consequence of the serious illness of her mother or aunt; or to see a gentleman fresh from the boards upon which he has been amusing the audience, as Caleb Quotem, or Jeremy Diddler, with tears in his eyes, and a low comedy wig on his head, giving an account of the melancholy state of his wife and three children, all dying of scarlatina; but such is too often the case: too often while the player is tortured with physical pain or sinking under moral distress, he is obliged in his vocation to wear the face of mirth, and distort his features into the extremes of grimace. The actress, writhing under the pangs of ingratitude in man, or insult from woman, is similarly driven to strain her lungs to charm the ears of an audience, or exhibit her graceful figure to the best advantage in the animated dance for the amusement of the half price company of a

one shilling gallery, while her heart is bursting with sorrow; add to all these inevitable ills, the constant labour of practice and rehearsal, the caprice of the public, the tyranny of managers, the rarity of excellence, the misery of defeat, and the uncertainty of health and capability, and then might one ask, Who would be an actor, who could be any thing else?

No matter: Mr. and Mrs. Fuggleston were of the profession, and Mr. Gervase Skinner had grown intimate with many of their brethren, knew all the points in dispute in the theatre, saw who could and who could not do particular things, understood who was in attendance upon *this* lady, who hovered about the other, fancying all the while that nobody noticed his own particular attentions and assiduities; he talked fluently of exits and entrances, cues and hits, and telling points; and above all, knew the exact acting length of every play on the stock list.

One evening, not having been at the theatre, and perhaps not quite expected in the court, Skinner arrived about supper time, and upon opening the door of the room where the banquet was spread, his surprise was excessive when he beheld, devouring cold shoulder of mutton and

pickled onions, in company with his host and hostess, Mr. Kekewich, senior, and Mr. Kekewich, junior, the particular objects of the hatred and vituperation of the said lady and gentleman: indeed his astonishment was such that he could not conceal it, even if he had seen any necessity for the effort, which in fact he did not.

No notice, however, was taken of his remarks, and Mrs. Fuggleston exceeded if possible in the civility and attention which she paid to the western manager and his son, the marks of friendship lavished upon them by her husband.

"I passed your pretty place, Sir, on Tuesday," said the elder Kekewich to Skinner; "all looking quite well, Sir."

"I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you there next year, Mr. Kekewich," said Skinner.

"I hope so, Sir," replied the manager; "I am endeavouring to persuade our dear little friend here, to join us again."

"You are irresistible," said the lady, to Skinner's infinite amazement, "we shall all meet at Bagsden next autumn, I hope; you are such a dear Kecky."

Skinner was in a stupor; he thought he

dreamt—for five months he had never ventured to mention the name of Kekewich, lest Amelrosa should faint, or die at the hateful sound; and here, after an interview which he knew could not have been more than of an hour's endurance, he found her "dear Keckying" the object of her avowed detestation, and hoping to meet happily under the roof, where nothing but hostility threatened a passing interview.

In fact, Kekewich found that Mrs. Fuggleston had made a hit in London, and found it was his interest to offer her terms, which she ascertaining to be better than she could get any where else, immediately accepted; and having applied a sponge and a little Lethæan water, to the record of their former quarrel, became as warm and intimate a friend with the destroyer of her theatrical happiness as ever she had been at any previous part of her life.

Skinner wondered, but in the end attributed the reconciliation to the forgiving disposition of his fair friend, and proceeded as usual to drive his Amelrosa on her unoccupied days, to all the "shady, blest retreats," in the environs of the metropolis; where they keep "fish alive," and "dress dinners on the shortest notice."

Ealing, with its hats; Snaresbrook, with its pond; Richmond, with its lovely hill; Cranford-bridge, with its bowling green; Woodford, with its wells; Hornsey, with its wood; Greenwich, with its water—all of these were in turn visited; and if the arrival was so timed as to avoid the charge of dinner, still over the steams of the best bohea, and inhaling the fragrance of buttered toast, Gervase and the kind Amelrosa continued to pass their time much to the delight of the lady, to the gratification of her husband, and to the joy of her friend.

It would not amuse the reader to detail the innumerable illustrations of character, which these little junkettings produced. At one time Skinner resolved to see that his horse was not defrauded of his corn (for he had sent his somewhat too inquisitive servant back to Somersetshire), followed the hostler, and procured the provender himself, with which having proceeded to a dark stable, where he had seen his horse first installed, he unwittingly fed the steed of some other traveller, which during his absence had taken *his* horse's place. At another, he drove across a rugged common avowedly to see a beautiful view: but in fact, to avoid a penny

toll, and broke one of the springs of his stanhope; to which inconvenience and damage, was to be added, the expense of a post-chaise to convey himself and his fair friend home, besides the charge for taking his injured horse and broken vehicle to London; but one adventure *must* be told, since it led to results of the first importance to the general issue of my story.

The curiosity of ladies is most libellously celebrated in tales of fiction, and that it *is* libellously celebrated, any body who will take the trouble to watch the curiosity of men, will very soon be convinced; but the curiosity of Mrs. Fuggleston upon the point now about to be discussed, was so powerfully aided and assisted in its operation, by the "ruling passion" of Mr. Skinner, that if they are not doomed to divide the inquisitiveness, they at least deserve to share the blame which resulted from their consequent conduct.

In the course of their various conversations during their drives, the merits of the horse which drew them, had sometimes, for want of a better, furnished them with a topic; not that Skinner, who had no desire to have the price which he paid for the animal accurately ascer-

tained, had ever enlarged upon his excellent paces, steadiness, speed, figure, and action, and so forth, with the warmth which he really felt. One day, however, he happened to let slip the mention of the only fault attributable to his steed, his insuperable affection for the Crown at Chipping Ongar.

The incredulity which at first seized upon Mrs. Fuggleston when she heard this description of the impossibility of forcing so quiet and amiable a creature past a particular house, certainly gave place almost immediately to the desire to know, whether such an impossibility really existed; a curiosity natural enough in her, because, as she hinted to Skinner, she had a very old friend, indeed she believed some sort of relation, living within half a mile of Chipping Ongar, whom she had not seen for many years, but who would be delighted to give them a snug bit of dinner whenever they went to see her: she did not know exactly where it was, but they could easily find it out, and so on.

Now, truth to be told, Skinner himself had several times felt a desire to ascertain the power of his hand and skill over the animal, in forcing him past the attractive sign, but had not decided

upon the measure, when the prospect of a dinner with all its etceteras, gratis, for his enamorata and himself, settled the point, and he determined that the following day should clear up the doubt and difficulty.

Accordingly the story was told to Fuggleston, his approbation of the experimental measure obtained, and an additional suggestion of his was, that if Mrs. Fuggleston's friend could give them beds, or procure beds for them in the neighbourhood, he thought they had better not think of returning that night; it would be dark, and the distance was long, upwards of twenty miles, the horse would be tired; indeed Mr. Fuggleston made out such a list of disagreeables on the road home, that anybody who did not know, that he had a particular reason for wishing to be rid of his wife's company in town that evening, would have imagined him the tenderest possible husband of her care and safety. Skinner at once entered into the plan with rapture; for putting out of his head, if they ever entered it, all the possibilities which might happen, he saw in *prospectû*, dinner, tea, supper, breakfast, and lodging, all in the most agreeable society, and all "for nothing."

Early in the eventful day, then, did the happy travellers start; at an easy pace they went their way through the lengthened streets of the metropolis; passed the great mart, whose colonnades were yet unthronged; the vast pile of Oriental wealth and wisdom, which rises amidst the curried leather of Leadenhall; and that celebrated pump at Aldgate, whereon the drafts of needy men are said to be drawn, and so upon their road to Ongar—Mrs. Fuggleston's "things," stowed in the well of the stanhope, and Mr. Skinner's "change and razors" carefully deposited in the driving seat on which he sat.

Could any thing be more sociable, any thing more agreeable? The dust and flatness of the Mile-end road were not even noticed; Amelrosa was more than ever fascinating, and seemed, released as she was from the thraldom of home, to be doubly delightful.

At Chigwell they refreshed themselves and horse, and thus re-invigorated, pursued their journey towards Ongar. In the vicinity they inquired for Mrs. Sims, the lady who had the honour of being known and perhaps related to Mrs. Fuggleston; but nobody on that side Ongar

seemed to know them. Accordingly they resolved to proceed towards the Crown, to fulfil the great end of their experimental journey; but to the surprise of both, and perhaps their disappointment, the horse exhibited none of the violence anticipated, but went up to the door as mildly and as steadily, as if it had been that of the Eagle at Snaresbrook, or the Talbot at Richmond.

The bar bell sounded merrily—the waiter and chambermaid were at the door—"did they please to alight?" An inquiry was made after Mrs. Sims—they did not know the name—must be gone away—the master of the Crown was not at home, and would not be in, till late—gone to a sale with his wife; but the servants never heard of the name of Sims.

What was to be done? Skinner's sovereigns trembled in his pocket, when he found the Sims's were incognizable. Of course they must stop where they were—dinner must be ordered—the horse put up, and all made snug for the night, an arrangement which, to say truth, was not quite so disagreeable to my hero, as many others which had cost him less. Indeed, from the unequivocal satisfaction of Mrs. Fuggleston, he

began to suspect that there never *had been* a Mrs. Sims in the parish; but he had to be undeceived.

The waiter, who was extremely civil, and the chambermaid, who happening to be extremely pretty, Mrs. Fuggleston voted extremely pert, were both extremely sorry on account of the absence of their master and mistress, but endeavoured, it must be confessed, to make every possible reparation in their power, by the activity and readiness with which they prepared the banquet, and attended on the guests.

It would be needless to repeat here, the gentle converse of the happy pair, or endeavour to describe the endearing attentions which either paid the other during the day—the dinner was excellent, the wine delightful, the tea refreshing; every thing was nectarial and ambrosial, and nothing marred the suavity of their enjoyment, until the night closed in, and they retired to rest, to dream of the pleasures of the day.

There are calms which precede storms—there are delights which are repaid with torments—there is in all affairs a time for retribution, a day of reckoning; and Skinner was doomed in the morning to bear a tempest which in all the

placid pleasures of the preceding evening, he had not indeed anticipated.

Scarcely had the clock struck eight, when the noise of feet in the passage near the bedroom door, and a murmur of voices rising ever and anon, into sounds less cautious or pacific, assailed his ear.

"I don't know that," said one.

"Well, but he'll come down to breakfast, or he would not have come here at all," said another.

"I don't care," rejoined the first voice.

"Well, then, knock at once," said a third.

And accordingly a smartish tattoo was performed upon the door of the sleeping-room.

"Who's there?" said Skinner.

"When you can make it convenient, Sir, I wish to speak to you," said a stranger.

"Who are you?" inquired my hero.

"I have got a message for you, Sir. I can wait," said the stranger. And then Skinner heard somebody say, in an under tone, "Go and stop under the window."

"I'll be down directly," said Skinner.

"Very well, Sir," said another voice, somewhat more mildly.

Skinner began most rapidly to dress himself, and in a few minutes, without having disturbed his razors, or rendered himself quite fit to be seen, opened the door and found himself surrounded by three or four persons in the passage.

"You had better go down first," said one who seemed in authority; "'tis no use frightening the lady."

"Lady!" contemptuously said a portly man, who turned out to be the landlord; "well, go down then; but, mind, fasten the door."

Skinner looked somewhat aghast, but overcome by the peculiarity of his situation, instinctively accompanied the persons before and behind him, who had dispersed themselves so as to prevent his taking any other road.

Into the parlour then my hero was conducted.

"Shut the door, Mr. Solomons," said the landlord.

"Well, gentlemen," said Skinner, "what next?"

"Why, Sir," said the landlord, "next is, you must please to go before a magistrate."

" A magistrate !" said Skinner, " upon what account, pray ?"

" On what account ?" said the landlord, who was sorely irritated, " why, on account of my Peacock."

" Your what, Sir ?" exclaimed Skinner. " I know nothing of a peacock."

" Not by that name, Mr. Griffin, perhaps," said one of the party to the landlord.

" No, Sir," said Skinner, " nor by any other name; and I desire you will as speedily as possible explain to me the cause of this most insolent and infamous conduct."

" Why, Sir," said the landlord, " you perhaps may think it insolent and infamous; but you or your companions did not think it either insolent or infamous to steal my Peacock."

" Sir, I declare I know nothing about a peacock ; I can shew—"

" What, not with four black legs and a switch tail ?" said the man.

" A peacock with four black legs and a switch tail—the man's mad," exclaimed Skinner.

" Not a peacock," said the constable—for so he was—" but a horse called Peacock ; him as

you was young enough to drive here yesterday in your shay."

"My horse!" said Skinner, "I bought the horse in London."

"Well," said the constable, "tell Mr. Griffin who you bought him of, and that will help perhaps to get you off."

"Off?" said Skinner, "why, what——"

"Oh! you are not going so easy," said Griffin. "Who did you buy my Peacock of?"

"A man," said Skinner.

"I suppose so; what's his name—where does he live?"

"Upon my word," said my hero, "I don't know; I met him in the street, and—"

"—Bought my horse of him, did you? That's likely, isn't it, Jem?—perhaps you know what you gave for him?"

"I gave fifty pounds for him," said Skinner.

"Well done, old one," said the ostler, "now you *have* settled it. Master refused a hundred and twenty for him to my sartan knowledge, just afore he was stolen."

"But what have I to do with that?" said Skinner: "the horse is mine, I tell you."

"Not so, Master," said the constable; "Mr. Griffin swears it is his, and has accordingly taken possession of it; and now you had better come quietly up to the Squire's, and see what you can make out afore him."

"I'm most ready to go any where," said Skinner; "only let me just communicate to the lady. I——"

"The lady," said Griffin, "I don't think you need much trouble yourself about she. Who d'ye think they asked after, while I was out yesterday?" continued the landlord, addressing himself to the constable.

"How should I know?" said the man in authority.

"Why, them Sims's," said Griffin, "as used to live down by the ashes in that white house."

"What! them as was transported for robbing Squire Thompson's?" said the ostler.

"The very same," said Griffin.

"My eye," said the ostler, quitting the room, shrugging up his shoulders in amazement.

To describe Skinner's distress at the moment, is beyond my power. The horror of having lost his horse, of being actually suspected of felony, shipwrecked at the Crown at Chipping

Ongar, with Mrs. Fuggleston to be left unprotected—what was to be done?

"I can only say," said Skinner, "that I am a gentleman. I bought the horse in the manner I describe to you; if it turns out to be your horse, of course I shall make every reparation in my power."

"I've done myself that service," said Griffin; "the horse is safe enough out of your reach. I have put the harness in your shay; somebody else may claim that if they can."

By this time Mrs. Fuggleston, who had huddled on her clothes, found her way to the scene of action. In vain did she protest that Mr. Skinner was the gentleman he represented himself, and swear vehemently to the truth of all his statements, without knowing whether they were correct or not; but all *she* said went for nothing, for having unwittingly committed herself, by her inquiries after the detected family of the Sims's, who when she last knew them appeared to her, in her then station of life, to be very respectable people, not the slightest credit was attached to any thing she ventured to advance.

A truce, however, was established, and it was

agreed that Skinner should be allowed under the *surveillance* of some of the by-standers, to arrange his dress previously to being conveyed to the magistrate's house, where he was to undergo a formal examination. In the mean time, one of the parties (the exciseman, I believe), rather more civilized than the rest, suggested to Skinner that even if he were wholly blameless, the situation in which he was placed was an extremely unpleasant one; and that the account he gave, and said he only could give, of the mode in which he became possessed of so valuable a horse, from a stranger, at a price so little commensurate with its real worth, would, he apprehended, be so unsatisfactory, that he had better, if possible, give some references corroborative of his own representations regarding his character and circumstances; a suggestion for which Skinner was really grateful at a moment of embarrassment, in which he had become involved, purely from having "upon principle" bought a bargain.

When he returned to the breakfast-room, where Mrs. Fuggleston was weeping, he mentioned to her the view which the exciseman took of the case, and the necessity of procuring evidence of

his respectability: how to attain this object appeared to him the greatest difficulty; but with women, difficulty only increases ingenuity; and in one moment the intelligent heroine saw a way out of all her own involvements, by taking which, she might work the liberation of Skinner, and set his character in a proper point of view. She would instantly post to London, and send back her husband and any other person Mr. Skinner chose, to satisfy his rustic accusers of his innocence and identity—the idea was a brilliant one—a post-chaise was forthwith prepared, for which the economical Skinner had to furnish the hire. Indeed, the sight of his purse worked some change in the opinion of the landlord—and the intrepid belle was to proceed instantly on her mission; in less than three hours she could be in town, and in little more than six, the testimony of his worth, virtue, honour and integrity, would arrive at the Crown. There was indeed no alternative, and the lady, not only anxious to serve her friend, but to get entirely quit of the affair herself, in less than ten minutes was on the road to the metropolis, having deposited the well of the stanhope, containing all her "personals," withinside the

post-chaise, which was to bear her to Martlett-court.

The impulse of rage and revenge having in some degree subsided, Griffin conducted himself with something more like moderate civility towards my hero, until it was time to proceed to the magistrate; when Skinner, putting his purse in his hand as a pledge of his respectability, assured him that *he* was in fact the sufferer by the affair, and that he really was what he represented. Griffin, in spite of the opinion of his wife, who could not endure a woman who painted by day-light, and had formed the most contemptuous opinion of Amelrosa from her having inquired for the Sims's, consented to let him remain where he was, until the arrival of his friends from town, a measure to which he the more readily acceded, from having heard that the magistrate, before whom Skinner was to be taken, was from home, and not likely to return until the close of the day—however, he played his cards, so as to induce Gervase to consider himself under an obligation, which he would be expected eventually to consider in the bill.

Fortune, however blind she is, sometimes

seems to see, so kindly and justly does she dispense her favours. After waiting until near four o'clock in a state of sad suspense, an extremely smart phaeton drove up to the door, which contained a person—not indeed the expected one, but one whom Skinner instantly recognised as Mr. Bumble, the third partner in the insolvent banking-house in London.

In a moment my hero exclaimed, "Mr. Bumble! Mr. Bumble!" and in another moment, attended by his *keepers*, was at the side of his carriage.

In two minutes more, Skinner was a restored man. Mr. Bumble, who in consequence of the embarrassed state of his affairs, had removed from his city residence to a beautiful villa, the property of his wife, in the neighbourhood of Ongar, having heard the history, assured the persons concerned, of the truth of Mr. Skinner's statement, and became answerable with his word for his appearance at any time or place required, to give such evidence as might elucidate the circumstances of the robbery and further the ends of justice; and wound up his civility by asking my hero to join a party of friends whom he expected to dine with him at

Belle-vue, where he should be but too happy to receive him.

Skinner—who, now his turn was served, immediately began to recollect the twelve hundred and thirty pounds, about which, or the prospect of a dividend, he felt he could not then well inquire—excused himself by stating the fact, that he expected some persons from London to identify him, and that he must return with them, and indeed, could not well be absent when they arrived, after having induced them to come so far.

Bumble admitted the excuse with the most courteous resignation; and having jestingly directed the landlord to take great care of his visitor, drove off to enjoy the miserable fare and the sad privations which the pineries and ice-houses of his lady (luckily preserved entirely for her) could afford him and his distressed visitors, in the extremity of ruin.

Skinner, released from thraldom and imputation, discovered from the landlord that the horse, Peacock, had been stolen from him about three months before; that he had endeavoured to trace him in vain, and having understood that he had been exported to the continent, had given up all hopes of recovering him, until, upon

his return the night before, his ostler informed him of the safe arrival of the well known animal, which he had secured according to law.

This explanation immediately accounted for the horse-dealer's (perhaps horse-stealer's) injunction as to the Crown at Chipping Ongar, and Skinner again cursed his stars at having been induced by Amelrosa to violate the restriction laid upon him, which ended in all the difficulty whence he had just escaped, and the indescribable disgrace of being known to the Sims's, late of Ongar, but more recently of Sidney, in the colony of New South Wales.

As time wore on, Skinner felt it necessary to order dinner for himself and his coming friend; who, as if he had borrowed the nose of a pointer, drove up to the door just two minutes before the hour fixed for the repast.

Fuggleston's anxiety was, however, soon released, and when the mind is at ease, the stomach is most active. My hero explained all the circumstances to his friend, in the course of which, it came out that he had only given fifty guineas for his inimitable horse, and that the "chay" was second-hand, and a vast deal more, which, however mortifying to Skinner's

vanity, it was necessary to explain, in clearing away the mystery in which his purchase was involved.

Mrs. Fuggleston got safe to town, but Fuggleston was out: indeed, as he let himself in always with a key, the maid could not say at what hour he came home, or whether he had been home until the morning. He was found at one of the houses of rendezvous in the neighbourhood, and lost no time in executing his mission. Amelrosa wished to return with him to Ongar, but she had to play, and it was impossible: however, he had given one of the watchmen of the theatre a shilling to see her home after the performance, and they had ordered some veal-cutlets and bacon to be ready by eleven, at which time they hoped to be back, all snug and comfortable, in Martlett-court.

It is impossible to describe the good humour and conviviality of the two friends after their dinner. Fuggleston declared the incident would be quite a hit in a farce, only perhaps rather too improbable; and Skinner drank a bumper of the blackest, bitterest port in Christendom, to the fair messenger who had executed his mission so expeditiously.

"What treasures after all, are women!" said Skinner, as he drained his glass to the dregs; "there's no friendship so sincere, so disinterested as that of a female—I am sure I ought to say so."

"And I, Mr. Skinner," said the actor, with tears, or what seemed tears in his eyes, "ought to be thankful to Providence for having given me such a wife as Amy; and as the immortal Billy has it, Sir,

'He that comforts my wife, cherishes my flesh and blood,'

and so, Sir, I thank you for your toast."

"Who your friend Billy may be," said Skinner, "I don't pretend to say, but this I *do* say, that I never shall forget Mrs. Fuggleston's activity in my behalf to-day, nor lose the recollection of your kindness and promptitude in coming to extricate me from a very disagreeable dilemma."

"What would I *not* do?" said Fuggleston.

"A thousand thanks," exclaimed Skinner: "friendship is in truth a passion superior to love, for when sincere it must be reciprocal."

"There's nothing so charming," exclaimed Fuggleston, again filling his glass.

"'What is life without a friend?'"

It seemed almost a sin to break in upon such an interchange of sentiment, by talking of time, and a downright shame to look at a watch; but it was now past seven, and the cutlets were to smoke in Martlett-court in four hours; and with so good an excuse as Amelrosa waiting, my hero suggested their finishing that bottle and then ordering a chaise.

"With all my heart, Sir," said Fuggleston, "whatever you please; I'm always agreeable."

The bell was rung, the bill ordered, and the chaise forthwith to be prepared. Skinner, with more than usual delicacy, stepped out of the dinner-room and paid the amount due, which, with (for him) a handsome douceur to the attendants, was received with all that show of gratitude so pleasant to the donor and so proper in the acceptor.

"I think," said Fuggleston, inquiringly, "one glass of brandy-and-water before we start, Mr. Skinner?"

"To be sure," said my hero, "a very good idea—the air is cold, the way is long."

No sooner said than done; the tumblers were produced, and Skinner proceeded to arrange with the landlord about the return of his stanhope to town, which the now civil Boniface promised to send up at the tail of a waggon, early in the next week; a delay, as Skinner observed, of no great importance, since he had lost his horse.

"You may cry, with Richard, Sir," said Fuggleston,

"'Give me another horse, bind up my wounds.'"

"I'm glad there's no wounds, Sir," said the landlord, as Skinner again retired to pay for the additional drink; "it was a sad mistake; however, a man cannot bide quiet when he sees a valuable horse like that, in another person's hands, knowing it to be his own."

"Oh, very true," said Fuggleston; "but I know my friend, and can safely say

'He is not a pick-purse or a horse-stealer;'

but you, who did not, did but justly; only you

were, perhaps, a little too hasty. I say this now he is out of the room, not to make words."

"Why, I'll tell you, Sir," said the landlord, "I didn't want to make any stir about it till the gentleman came down to breakfast; but my wife thought perhaps he might have overheard our talk about it in the passage, and would bolt, or else I should not have thought of knocking at the bed-room door so, for fear of frightening the lady."

"Oh, what *she* heard it too?" said Fuggleston.

"She couldn't well be off hearing on it," said Griffin, "for we were all in the passage, standing round their door, while Jem and his brother were under the window, to prevent their escape."

"How d'ye mean, *their* door?" said Fuggleston.

"Why the lady's and gentleman's--the door of the room where they slept," said the unconscious Griffin.

"They! what, hadn't they two rooms?" exclaimed Fuggleston.

"La! no, to be sure not," said the landlord, "isn't the lady Mrs. Skinner?"

"Mrs. Devil—no, Sir," said the Thespian, "she is Mrs. Fuggleston—so, Sir," continued he to my hero, who just opportunely entered to receive a volley of reproaches—"so, Sir, though you are innocent of horse-stealing, it seems you are guilty of deeper crimes." Then turning to Griffin, he continued, "Mr. Landlord, you must see the impossibility of my stopping here another moment. Mr. Skinner, I cannot trust myself with you—I am not in a situation to take those steps which my feelings would prompt me to adopt; but I have heard enough to establish your infamy and my own shame—a return which I little expected for the confidence I have placed in you; but, as I said before, our communication must here cease; the law must decide this business; and your evidence, Mr. Griffin, and that of your family, will be essential to the cause of justice. And so, Mr. Skinner, you may expect that visitation for your vices which courts award, and laws afford. We cannot travel together, that is quite plain, Sir; and so here ends for ever our extremely pleasant acquaintance."

During this rapid development of his feelings, Fuggleston kept constantly turning from

one to the other of the auditors, dividing between them all his eloquence and animation; and having concluded his philippic, he finished his brandy and water at one gulp, rushed out of the room, out of the house, jumped into the post-chaise, which was waiting at the door (and for which my hero had already paid), and was, in five minutes, half a mile on his way to London.

"This is a pretty business," said Skinner to the landlord.

"Dear me, Sir!" said Griffin, "if I had known it, I wouldn't have said a word. Dear heart, what will be thought of the house, I——"

"Dear heart, what will become of *me*, Sir?" said Skinner; "he has taken the chaise too; well I may as well stop here to-night—I have no taste for London now, nor any thing to do there that I know of. This *is* an affair—perhaps, Mr. Griffin, you will do me the favour to say nothing about it—I have some very particular reasons for wishing to avoid publicity."

"You may rely on me, Sir," said Griffin; "only I suppose some day it must all come out. One thing I can tell you, which is, if you don't know much of the lady, them Sims's as she asked after was no great things."

"Never mind the Sims's," said Skinner; "leave me if you please for the present—I wish the devil had the whole concern—I'll ring when I want any thing—there—there, pray leave me."

And so Griffin having retired, Skinner was left to his thoughts, which it may easily be conceived were any thing but agreeable; after escaping a charge of felony so cleverly, to be detected in an intrigue so clumsily; for which detection too, it was clear his pocket must eventually smart pretty severely; the *éclat* of which would, without doubt, travel by means of those national luminaries, the newspapers, to the retreat of his intended wife, and probably destroy all chance of his acquiring the hand, or rather the purse, of Emma Gray, whose affection for him, even as it was, he somewhat doubted, and whose delicacy would naturally take the alarm, if this piece of misconduct became notorious.

These were the greater evils which assailed him; amongst the minor ills, he accounted the loss of his cheap horse—how dear to him, who shall tell?—the disbursements for the expedition to London to redeem his character, and bring down his friend—the coolness with which that

gentleman had denounced his infamy, and his intention to proceed legally against him, having swallowed the last glass of brandy-and-water he ever could imbibe at his expense, and wound up all by carrying off the post-chaise, for which he had himself actually paid.

That Skinner should feel much disposed to sleep, under these circumstances, was not to be expected. He walked about the neighbourhood till ten, heard the whole history of his affair and its discovery told with the most pleasing additions by the chambermaid, to a crowd of plebeian tipplers in the tap-room as he passed the window, and retired to his room at a quarter before eleven, to ruminate upon the delights of friendship, the advantages of cheap purchases, and the profitable results of blind bargains made "upon principle."

CHAPTER V.

> I oft have heard him say, how he admired
> Men of your large profession, that could speak
> To every cause, and things mere contraries,
> Till they were hoarse again, yet all be law—
> That, with most quick agility, could turn
> And return, make knots and undo them,
> Give fork'd counsel, take provoking gold
> On either hand, and put it up.
>
> BEN JONSON.

SEVERE as was the infliction which had fallen upon my hero, and disagreeable as was the situation in which he found himself, the positive ill was nothing when compared with the evils likely to grow out of it. As I have already said, such an event as had just taken place could not be concealed from the public; for, if it did not meet their eyes in the shape of a duel, it most certainly would edify them in the form of a civil action, and the *éclat* would, in all probability, destroy his chance of marrying a girl so unworldly in her notions, and so unsophisticated in her character as Emma Gray.

It will be observable to the reader, that in the calculation of probabilities, connected with his case, Mr. Gervase Skinner did not bestow much time upon the consideration of poor Amelrosa's detection and degradation; if, however, it had struck him that after having paid damages and costs, and lost his hopes of an advantageous alliance in another quarter, he would naturally have to support the fallen object of his past affections and his present dread, during the rest of her natural life, he might have been induced to picture to himself the misery of the discarded wife, the ejected faithless one, thrust from her husband's door with scorn and ignominy; at present, self so entirely engrossed my hero, that he gave no portion of his thoughts to his ruined victim.

To pay, he found it necessary to work himself up; the certainty was obvious; and, "upon principle," he thought, if possible, by a compromise with Fuggleston, a sort of "hush up" might be made, which would be equally satisfactory to the injured husband, and do less damage either to himself or the partner of his crime, than a great long trial, with a crowd of witnesses, and all their anecdotes of key-holes and corners,

and peeping and prying, all to be printed and published in every periodical paper in the empire, for the amusement and edification of the rising generation of both sexes.

The great difficulty which he had to encounter was the opening of the affair; how to get at the injured friend; how to be early enough in the field to check publicity, which was his great object, and for the attainment of which, he was, *mirabilê dictû*, ready to disburse, I cannot exactly say liberally, but largely, in order to secure a more important advantage in the north.

As my readers are doubtless all excellent persons, and have never committed either an imprudent or an improper act, they cannot duly appreciate the pangs of repentance (which, it is said, never comes too late) which poor Skinner felt for the imprudent sacrifice he had made to passion, at the expense of "principle." He qualified the enormity of his conduct, however, by the reflection, that he must have been more or less than man to have resisted the pointed kindnesses and insinuating tenderness of the frail fair one; and that having had the misfortune to be detected, all consideration was useless, except

that which might be applied to ascertaining the cheapest way of getting out of the scrape into which he had fallen.

It seemed now absolutely necessary that he should get to town in the morning; wait to see the party he had so deeply injured, and the affair in the hands of some mutual friend, who might propose a comparatively amicable arrangement in a quiet way; and fortune seemed, at the present juncture, again to have slipped the fillet from her eyes to do him service; for the accidental arrival of Mr. Kekewich in London promised to afford the desired channel of mediation, which hardly any other event could have presented.

The moment the thought of Kekewich struck him, he determined upon action; and having arranged about his gig, proceeded to embark himself in a post-chaise for London, under a heavy fire from the eyes of the outraged, scandalized Mrs. Griffin, several of her female acquaintance, and most of their numerous offspring, who (such is the morality of the Ongarians) had been prepared to behold, in the person of the libertine, a monster of deformity; and were proportionably disappointed in finding my hero the

plain, unassuming country gentleman, whose homely appearance (which I have already endeavoured to describe) did by no means justify their anticipations of horns, hoofs, and a tail, which their minds, full of indignation at his wickedness, had pictured to themselves as the fit and proper attributes of such a fiend.

Arrived at the Hummums, the eyes of my hero were saluted by various letters to his address: one, from his future uncle-in-law, in the north, he thought would "keep"—one from Amelrosa herself, whose well-known writing flashed across his eye, would, one would have supposed, been the most interesting to his heart; but a third, directed in a clear, upright, round, strange hand, and addressed to Mr. Gervase Skinner, did, in fact, "enchain his regards."

This he opened with trepidation, and read as follows :—

"Lyon's Inn, —— 18, 18—.

"Sir,

"Having a communication to make to you on the part of Mr. Fuggleston, of the Theatre

Royal, Drury-lane, may I beg to know, at your earliest convenience, when I may expect the favour of an interview.

"Your obedient servant,

"CHARLES SCREWMAN."

Skinner was struck upon reading this brief address, with the rapidity of Mr. Fuggleston's motions, not at the moment calculating that a great object would be gained by expedition, seeing that the speedy serving of a writ upon him would accelerate the issue of the affair by bringing it to bear upon him in the approaching Easter term.

From this official epistle he turned to that which he knew came from the fair sufferer herself. This he opened, but without that intensity of devotion, that complete abstraction from every other worldly thing, which ought to have possessed his mind while proceeding to read the narrative of sorrows and of sufferings to which he had exposed the too confiding writer. Her letter follows :—

"Carmarthen-street, East, Saturday.

"How I am to write, or what I am to say,

I know not. My hand shakes to that degree, that I fear you will not be able to read this scrawl. Only conceive my situation—I have taken temporary refuge here with a new, yet kind female friend, but it can only be temporary. *He* returned last night—I anxiously expected *you both*—my little banquet was prepared—I watched every step up the court. I kept looking out of the window, so that I might be ready to receive you—when he came alone. What passed I cannot explain or detail; suffice it to say, that every coarseness, every indignity that woman could be exposed to, I suffered. I was denied a home—I was driven into the streets at nearly eleven o'clock at night—is it not a mercy I preserved my senses?

"My dresser, a woman of liberal mind and kind heart, seemed at the moment to me to be the only person to apply to. I sought and found her; and to her kindness in mentioning the lady at whose hospitable house I now am, am I indebted for a shelter for my head. This is too much to bear. How or in what manner the discovery was made which has ruined your too fond, too thoughtless Amelrosa, I cannot yet make out. At present, I believe, *he* has

mentioned it to no one; at least, so Mrs. Riley tells me she believes, but it must transpire. I am too proud to ask to be forgiven; besides, he is so very particular. What I shall do I know not. I have to play Mrs. Haller to-night in the play, and Little Pickle in the farce. Mr. F. plays Tag for the first time—we shall meet—we have comic situations together. To a mind overflowing with grief, what can be more dreadful? The Stranger itself is worry enough; but the Spoiled Child—conceive my agitation—degraded, debased, spurned, and rejected as I am, I have to sew the skirt of my injured husband's coat to the old woman's gown, and to play all sorts of tricks to him—what must be our mutual feelings? Oh! Mr. Skinner, you may reproach me—you may tell me that I ought to have considered these things before; but all I ask is—can the human mind support it—what will the audience think of me? I shall be unable to give any of the points with effect; sometimes, when I recollect all that has passed, I think I had better send an excuse; but *he* will know the cause, and perhaps betray all. But then what am I to do for the little properties which belong to me, and are in Martlett-court? Per-

haps he would give them to Mrs. Riley if she went for them? But I ask questions of you which you cannot answer, and write, perhaps, what may not reach you for days. If you get this, let me entreat you not to think of coming here; in a short time, perhaps, I may make some new arrangement as to residence; perhaps I may be dead.

"If, however, you think it worth while to see your unfortunate friend, direct a note to me, under cover to Mrs. Riley, at Mr. Higgs's, Vinegar-yard, and I will fly to meet you any where after to-morrow, but it requires all my strength to prepare for the events of this evening.

"Yours ever truly,

"AMELROSA."

"Don't forget that the driving seat of your gig is at Martlett-court."

Having read this, Skinner "took a moment or two to consider what he should do." His mind still hung upon Kekewich and his amicable interference, for he had long known the manager, and believed him his grateful friend; which in the main, it is natural to suppose he

was; for although the exhibition of Skinner's worst points and personal peculiarities with which he was in the habit of favouring his associates, might in ordinary society give the appearance of insincerity or even malice, with Kekewich it amounted to little more than a habit of quickly perceiving the ridiculous wherever it appeared, and as quickly imparting the fruits of his perception, for the amusement of the companions by whom he might happen to be surrounded.

The difficulty which principally presented itself to his mind in carrying this scheme of interesting Kekewich as a mediator, arose from the possibility that he might not be acquainted with the facts, and the probability that if he were not, he might otherwise never be put in possession of them; and in that case an application to *him* might, in fact, amount to a gratuitous discovery of the intrigue to a person whose ignorance of it might greatly contribute to the oblivious termination he so much desired.

In this turmoil of doubt and uncertainty, my hero proceeded to open the letter from the north, which he found to contain an announcement of Emma Gray's completion of her nineteenth year,

and the consequent approach of the period at which the alliance between her and Skinner was actually to take place.

Such an announcement at such a moment would, under any circumstances, have increased the perplexities of a man situated as Skinner was; but more especially was it agitating when he found it contained something like a friendly hint that he had better secure his prize, and make no unnecessary delays; and that, moreover, it was seasoned with quaint observations about "Flies hovering round sugar, and butterflies round flames," accompanied with a high eulogium upon Emma's beauties, virtues, and accomplishments, all of which were elaborately descanted upon clearly with a view to expedite the movements of the somewhat indifferent lover in claiming his affianced bride. The letter, however, had a powerful effect; for although nothing *in prospectû*, even to the amount of a pretty girl and fifteen thousand pounds, could so powerfully affect him as to outweigh the embarrassments of the moment in which he was involved, still he felt roused to action in the matrimonial scheme from a double motive: first, because it behoved him more than ever to secure a property which

might compensate for the loss he must necessarily incur in the Fuggleston affair; and secondly, because the completion of his scheme in the north would afford an excellent excuse to the fair Amelrosa, (of whom he was heartily sick), for his retreat from London, while the result of his matrimonial expedition would finally absolve him from any thing like faithful attention to a lady whose charms, however dazzling in public, had lost their influence over him, after his short, but very intimate acquaintance with them in private.

Ungrateful as this seems, hard-hearted, base, and unmanly, it is the way of the world. Connections rashly formed, upon the impulse of passion only, without some better feeling,—without esteem and respect, invariably terminate as this of Skinner and Amelrosa. When there are exceptions, and when the man does all a man *can* do to repair the mischief he has committed, it is more an act of duty than of inclination; and the remainder of their lives is passed by the united couple in wishing themselves relieved from an engagement which, however it may seem at first to quiet the conscience of one party, or the appeals of the other, never attains the end of

restoring them to the world in their proper sphere, or of overcoming those evils which misconduct and its consequent remorse never fail to inflict upon those who have violated one of the soundest and most beneficial principles of religion and social morality.

To my hero the world was like one great mirror—whichever way he looked, in whatever point of view he considered it, self was presented to his view: there might, indeed, in the background, fainter and farther away, glimmer other objects; but full in the front, and submitted to his first thoughts, contemplations, and reflections, eternally stood Gervase Skinner, of Bagsden Parva, in the county of Somerset, Esq.

At the present crisis his delicacy in appealing to Kekewich arose less from a fear of betraying the fault of the fair culprit, than from the apprehension of needlessly making an explanation which might involve himself; on the other hand, the idea of the attorney filled him with horror—the vision of this obdurate minister of the law, the writ, the pleadings, the issue, the verdict, the damages, the judgment, the costs,—all passed in detail before him; and after deliberating half an hour on his own perils, and devoting half a

minute to the undone Amelrosa, he determined to overcome his scruples, and rush to the conflict at once; and, accordingly, in a fit of desperation, he proceeded strait to Lyon's Inn, where he at length discovered Mr. Screwman's name on the door of a set of chambers, *au troisième*,—here his fondly cherished hopes of finding the "oak sported," which might have given him some little respite, vanished; and boldly exerting all his energies, he gave that welcome pattering rat-a-tat with Mr. Screwman's little brass knocker, which, like the hopper bell of a mill, seemed to cry "more grist," and announce the capture of a new victim, as surely as the sudden fall of a mouse-trap door.

"Is Mr. Screwman at home?" said my hero; to a small, unshaven, youngish man, who, without a neckcloth (his shirt collar open), and wearing a sort of half-dirty morning gown, with slippers on his feet, and stockings bearing the mark of yesterday's boots upon the heel and instep, opened the door,—

"*My* name is Screwman, Sir," said the small, unshaven, youngish man.

Skinner's heart palpitated—he was in the presence of the attorney whose frown he dreaded,

and he felt, or seemed to feel, all the money in his purse and pocket counting itself off, into marching order, in little detachments of six and eightpence and three and fourpence each.

" *My* name is Skinner, Sir," said Gervase.

The unshaven countenance of the harpy brightened into a glow of unequivocal satisfaction at this announcement, while his companion's features were proportionably overcast, as he beheld on the table various papers and letters docketed Fuggleston *v.* Skinner, and folios of copy paper in a state of active preparation for briefs to barristers; such extraordinary rapidity of movement being in a great degree attributable to the paucity of occupation in the attorney, who had been recommended to the plaintiff on some former occasion by the landlord of one of the pot-houses in the vicinity of the theatre, and who was, as it may easily be imagined, one of the lowest of the low in that profession, the members of which are placed, by the force of character and reputation, at such immeasurable distances from each other in society, that unless they were all " gentlemen " by law, it would be impossible to fancy them animals of the same genus.

It would, perhaps, conduce but little to the development of my history to enter into a detailed description of the interview between the plaintiff's attorney and the defendant in this case, or to report, verbatim, the lengthened conversation which they held together. The main question for discussion was, whether, under all the circumstances, it would be more prudent for Skinner to effect, if possible, a compromise with the injured husband, which he soon perceived might be done, or suffer the case to go to trial; it having been decided in the morning between Mr. Screwman and his client that the amount at which damages were to be laid should be four thousand pounds.

The possibility of falling in with a jury who might be induced to find to the full extent of the sum laid, the determination to let judgment go by default, and reserve nothing for the public but the assessment in the Sheriff's Court, the doubts and difficulties of law, and the dread of notoriety, all conspired to hasten the conclusion of the business, by an offer of no less a sum than two thousand pounds as a soother to the feelings of Fuggleston; the understanding being, in case of the acceptance of the offer, that,

whatever subsequent arrangements Fuggleston might feel it right to make as to his domestic affairs, Skinner's name was never to be mentioned as their cause or origin.

This treaty, however, could not be concluded until the terms had been submitted to Fuggleston; indeed it required some little time for my hero to procure the money, or rather, to screw his nerves to a pitch of sufficient firmness to disburse it. It is needless to add, that when the proposition was made to the actor, he was enraptured with it, and the perfect secresy to which he was pledged was most agreeable to his view of the case, seeing that the same rule of silence which preserved Skinner from notoriety, protected him from observation or remark.

With such temptations to "arrangement" on either side, the following day was appointed for the ratification of the treaty and the fulfilment of its conditions, and the intervening hours were occupied by my hero in procuring the necessary means of saving his reputation; his care for which, rendered his demand for ready money somewhat surprising to his London agents. The avowed approach, however, of his marriage with

Emma Gray gave a colouring to his proceedings, more agreeable than the truth perhaps would have afforded; and, armed with the sum proposed, Skinner proceeded to Screwman's chambers on the following morning, where, having left his heart's treasure, he received an acknowledgment of the receipt of the money, explaining in its body the nature and conditions of the transaction, and exonerating the culprit from any further charges or claims upon the score of his transgression.

It is hardly possible to conceive the satisfaction of my hero when he quitted the Inn of Court, which contained his friend's lawyer and his own money, as he contemplated the work he had completed—the clean manner in which he had cleared himself of the affair, and the overthrow of all obstacles to his departure for the North, which he had achieved. He had written to Mrs. Fuggleston one of those shuffling, equivocating letters, which men of little minds under such circumstances sometimes write; and, being convinced that the two thousand pounds which he had just parted with would completely heal the differences between her and her husband, he proceeded to Long Acre to give directions for his

carriage to be got ready for a start in the morning, directing, at the same time, the coach-maker to send for his gig seat to Martlett-court —never, upon principle, losing sight of the minutest article in which he had the smallest interest.

Having made these arrangements, his thoughts for a moment reverted to his unhappy victim, and he—even he—felt that he could not separate from Amelrosa eternally without some parting communication; he therefore proceeded—it being all in the Thespian neighbourhood—to the lodgings of Mrs. Riley, in Vinegar-yard, which had been mentioned in Amelrosa's letter as a place where any message or communication would be carefully received.

On his arrival at the house, which in its lower part presented the agreeable spectacle of an oyster-shop, he inquired if the object of his search lived there; and was told she did, and was actually at home, in the "two-pair front;" towards which, lured by the sound of voices and the strong savour of roasting mutton, Skinner forthwith ascended. When he reached the door, and knocked against it for admission, a sudden scuffling was heard, and the loud sound of conversation was suddenly subdued into a whis-

pering, which was abruptly concluded. A door was "banged to," and immediately afterwards Mrs. Riley herself opened the door, and gave admittance to Gervase.

The room presented a novel spectacle to the country squire—indeed so novel, as to startle him: opposite the door, turned up within itself, stood a half-tester bed, the furniture of which was chequered: under its shadowy canopy on the floor, which was sanded, rested two or three band-boxes, a washing-bason and ewer of pure white crockery, together with tea-things, and other things of similar ware, conducive generally to comfort and convenience. Before the fire, suspended by some twisted worsted, dangled four or five bones of a neck of mutton, in a forward state of culinary preparation. On the hob of the grate, stood a black saucepan, containing potatoes, covered with a saucer; and on a small single-clawed table, scantily decked with a huckaback towel, appeared two plates, with knives and forks; a tea-cup contained the vinegar, and an old rouge pot was filled with the salt; the mustard—for the board had been evidently clothed with epicurean care—filled a *ci-devant* pomatum-pot; while the half loaf

rested plateless on the table, on one side of which, was placed a rush-bottomed chair, and on the other a three-legged stool.

The walls, pure in colour as the crockery, were not quite unadorned—here and there a brightly coloured print attracted the eye: the late Mr. Incledon, as Captain Macheath, in a scarlet coat, hung as a pendant to a portly lady, with a huge plume of feathers in her hat, sitting in a great chair, with St. Paul's in the back ground; and the royal game of goose, on a full sheet of foolscap, spread its margin immediately over the head of a civic patriot, depicted in all the glories of his mayoralty.

The chimney-piece was adorned with two green parroquets, with bright yellow beaks, in earthenware; a plaster figure of Shakspeare without a head, and a small effigy of Liston, in Paul Pry; two phial bottles, and a tin tea-canister, comprised the decorations of this part of the apartment, across which hung, upon an extended line, divers and sundry articles of wet wearing apparel, which had been recently removed from a tub which reposed itself securely upon a four-legged stand near one of the windows. A white cat, a black coal-scuttle,

and a brass "footman," completed the "properties" of the saloon, which had the happiness to call the amiable Isabella Riley, mistress.

"What may you please to want, Sir?" said Mrs. Isabella Riley, as she stood with the door in her hand, addressing herself to Mr. Gervase Skinner.

"I wanted," said the hero, somewhat overcome by the *coup-d'œil* which presented itself—"to know if you could tell me where Mrs. Fuggleston could be found."

There was a hesitation apparent on the part of Mrs. Riley, which a sudden and somewhat extraordinary noise in the apartment did not at all appear to cure.

"I mean," continued Skinner, "I wish to write to her, if you could tell me her address, or if you would forward a letter to her, I——"

"Why, Sir," said Mrs. Riley—and she hemmed once or twice—"Mrs. Fuggleston is not here—I ——"

"I did not expect to find her here," said Skinner, smiling, as if it were impossible that any thing so fair and fascinating as Amelrosa was, or once seemed to be, should be domesticated in the den before which he was standing;

"I only wished to know if I could forward a letter to her, as I leave town to-morrow."

Here another strange rumbling sound proceeded from the apartment.

"What is your name, Sir?" said Mrs. Riley.

"Skinner," said my hero.

Pride and dignity, which had been struggling in the cupboard, now gave way to love; a more violent noise was heard in the interior: a sudden fall of some sonorous article followed the commotion, and a rush of liquor from beneath the closet door, half covered the white-sanded floor of the room.

"Riley, let me out," exclaimed a voice, which in a moment Gervase recognized as Amelrosa's, who, in truth, had been, at her own desire, locked into the cupboard by her hostess; having, on the first approach of the visitor, fled to that hiding-place to which there was no fastening but the lock; the key of which, securely enclosed her, together with a quart pot of her favourite Whitbread, which, as it appeared in the sequel, had fallen a victim to the agitation which overcame her at the sound of her destroyer's voice—"Let me out, I say."

And in a moment, half-deluged with the

frothy liquid, the lovely victim stood before her Gervase, whose surprise at having thus strangely hit upon her, was, to say the least of it, quite as great as his pleasure; seeing that he had only wished to do what was right, and no more, and had no intention of risking his feelings in an interview with her.

"Which way shall I look?" exclaimed the sensitive creature—"Riley, my dear, go down stairs for a little; I'll call you presently—let no one come up."

"Yes, Ma'am," said Riley, casting a somewhat angry look at Skinner, and a very wistful regard upon the nearly done dainty which was dangling on the string before the fire. Amelrosa saw her hostess's meaning, and sympathized with her in a moment.—"*I'll* mind the mutton, my dear," said the considerate lady, nodding her head in a manner to assure her of its safety; and the dresser retiring, confident in the promise of her amiable superior, was soon heard stumping down the stairs,

"Coughing as she went, for want of breath."

It would, perhaps, occupy too much time, and

appear somewhat intrusive and even faithless, were I to tell my reader all that passed at the unexpected interview between the gay deceiver and his victim. Suffice it to say that she represented herself in a state of destitution as far as any future reliance on her husband was to be placed; that he had announced his positive determination never to receive her or live with her again; and that in consequence she had that morning relinquished her engagement at Drury Lane, upon a plea of ill health, where her obdurate spouse had, in the outset, expressed his resolution to remain; the constant professional intercourse which must take place, she said, was more than she could bear; and prudence itself was disregarded when opposed by feelings of a nature so powerful as her's; under the circumstances, indeed, she doubted whether she ever again could face an audience—and so on.

Skinner succeeded in the course of the dialogue in discovering that perfect secresy, on the part of Fuggleston, was understood and recognized as the principle upon which he had received the compensation spoken of; and my hero felt, as it may be easily imagined, proportionately assured by the intelligence which

Mrs. Fuggleston had received from her husband, who made the communication in order to ensure her silence—indeed no human being but Mrs. Riley was aware that they had separated; nor would any human being ever know the cause of the separation, if Mr. Skinner would place his Amelrosa beyond the chance of want, by the allowance of a small annuity.

The word annuity rung through his astounded ear; but the influence of Amelrosa, in exciting his present apprehensions, equalled her former power of enchaining his affection; and before the neck of mutton was nearly done, he had agreed to return to the attorney, and secure her an income of £150 per annum, which she pronounced adequate to all her wants and wishes, and sufficient to fall back upon, when time had robbed her of those charms and powers which had rivetted the eyes, and charmed the hearts, of the provincial public, through her brief, yet triumphant, professional career. They met again in the evening; my hero having, for the sake of the interview, delayed his departure for the north until the following day; and the treaty of peace and secresy was then and there ratified by the high contracting powers; Amelrosa declaring her

heart to be in Skinner's keeping, and he falsely pledging his faith to her for the sake of a peaceable parting; satisfied that, by his amicable arrangement of this affair, he had saved at least two thousand pounds; being convinced that, besides the damage which the notoriety of the transaction would have done him, the injured husband would have recovered to the last farthing of the sum at which he estimated his injury.

One thing, however, remained still a secret from the confiding Amelrosa. Skinner knew enough of the fair sex, unsophisticated as he was, to know that, unless he made her believe herself the exclusive object of his devotion and care, a return of affection was not to be expected. The entirety of a heart, and the sole possession of the loved one, are essential conditions in such a treaty as that which Skinner first sought to conclude with Mrs. Fuggleston; he knew that her affections were not to be gained if she could be led to imagine that his were divided (not that the share of his heart, which Emma Gray possessed, would have been missed in any scrutinizing examination of his passion); and, above all, he was convinced that if she were made to com-

prehend that he was actually on the eve of marriage to another, the success of his case was hopeless; therefore it was, that the whole history of his affair with Miss Gray had been kept a profound secret from the Fugglestons—her name was never mentioned, nor was the place of her residence ever named by Skinner, lest it should lead to some discussion, in which, thrown off his guard, he might betray himself. He had talked of a journey to the north; but the point to which his steps were to be directed always varied in his allusions; at one time he was going to Edinburgh, in hopes of seeing the greatest genius of the age; at another, to the Lakes to visit some of the smaller *genii;* at a third, he thought he should explore the Isle of Man; and at a fourth, extend his researches to the Orkneys—never, however, giving the slightest clue to his real meaning, or permitting himself to be questioned as to the real object of his expedition.

Having, therefore, sealed the lips of those who only could betray him, and blinded the eyes of those who might like to watch his proceedings, Mr. Gervase Skinner felt that he had brought his matters to an agreeable termination, and stepped into his travelling carriage on the

morning succeeding his last interview with Amelrosa, having been driven to adopt the expensive measure of posting, in order to keep up his dignity on so important an expedition; not, however, without having directed his servant to proceed upon the coach direct from Bristol, to meet him at Litchfield, on his road to his beloved; Skinner having calculated that he should, by this ingenious scheme, save upwards of one pound three shillings and sixpence, which he resolved to do "upon principle:"—how much he really saved, the reader will probably find in the sequel.

CHAPTER VI.

When I but think this sight may be our last,
If Jove could set me in the place of Atlas,
And lay the weight of Heaven and Gods upon me,
He could not press me more.

SHAKSPEARE.

It would not have suited the mirth-stirring purpose of Mr. Cruikshank to have added one more clever illustration of Time to those which have been so well received by the public—I mean, "the LAST TIME"—for it is full of sadness and of sorrow.

To see a person, or to visit a place, or to quit it for the last time, is at best a melancholy business, even though the person be indifferent to us, and the place in itself uninteresting.—I remember feeling a regret in leaving, avowedly for the "last time," an inconvenient cabin in an

ill-found ship, at the close of a tedious voyage, full of dangers and difficulties, cares and anxieties.

The simple act of separation from those with whom one has been for any length of time domesticated, even though we quit them with the determination of re-visiting them very shortly, gives a pang; it disarranges the habits, it unsettles the mind, and leaves the heart desolate; and this, not only if our associates be full of talent, mind, and genius, but even if they be matter-of-fact persons, who make up their every day conversation with trite remarks upon the weather, or observations like those of my worthy friend, Sir Mark Terrington—tell us when we part from these that we are parting for the last time, and let them be as dull as Dutchmen, or as ugly as Esquimaux, we shall still feel the uncomfortable sensation at separating eternally, amount to something like positive distress.

A man quits his house where he has lived happily for a certain term of years—he removes to one, better built, better arranged, better situated—yet, he hates to think that next Thursday will be the "last time" he shall ever sleep in a

home endeared to him by a thousand recollections, and which has so long been associated in his mind with the best and kindliest feelings of his nature.

I once knew a lovely girl, all kindness, all gentleness, all goodness; from *her* I parted, in the midst of gaiety, and in a crowd of idlers who were participating in it. We shook hands, and I left her. I never saw her again. Had I known, that I then beheld her for the "last time," my heart would have burst.

From such natural feelings, what a moral may be deduced! The commonest and most familiar objects of every day life, afford a rich harvest for reflection; the desk at which I write, I must once use for the "last time:" the watch which tells me the hour, which has travelled with me by day, and rested under my pillow at night, must be wound by me once, for the "last time." The door-way of my room, through which for years I have passed to my rest in health and spirits, must once be passed for the last time—and when that may be—God only knows.

In one only situation can a man be placed where the awful doubt is converted into a tremendous certainty—not the sick patient on the

bed of death, whose pulse beats faintly, and whose subsiding pain seems to announce the coming of his release. He may linger for hours; he may recover—the ray of hope beams, and those who love him share its brightness. His hours are not numbered. The sinking mariner clings to the last fragment of his ill-fated ship, holds on, while nature gives him strength, and as he mounts the toppling wave, strains his anxious eyes in search of assistance. A vessel *may* heave in sight; he *may* be drifted to some kindly shore; *his* fate is not decided.

The unhappy wretch who alone lives his last day hopeless, and in unmitigated misery, is the sentenced convict on the eve of execution: *he* sees and hears all that is passing round him, with the terrible consciousness that it is fo "last time."

He beholds the sun gleaming through the of his cell, in all his parting brightness, and kn he sees his golden rays for the last time— hears the prison clock record the fleeting minut —how fastly fleeting to him—throughout th night, each hour sounds to him for the "las time." Seven strikes upon the be —at eight he dies!

His wife, his children, his beloved parents, come to him: he stands amidst his family in the full possession of his bodily health, and all his mental faculties. He clasps them to his heart—they go: the door of his cell closes, and shuts them from his sight: he has seen them for the "last time." Never again shall he hear the voice of the mother who bore him—that voice which through years of infancy and youth, spoke nothing but love and kindness to her darling son.

He is summoned to the scaffold—the engine of death stands ready: he feels the pure air of heaven blow upon his face—the summer sun shines brightly; for the "last time," he sees the green fields, and the trees, and ten thousand objects familiar to us all. The cap is drawn ... his tear-fraught eyes!—the objects vanish, ...r, never, to be seen again by him! He ...s for the "last time" the sacred word of God ...n human lips; in another moment, the ...th struggle is on him, and he breathes for the "last time!"

To him alone, then, is the *exit* from this world ...f cares, regular and certain; in every other case, it is a mystery when the "last time" shall come.

It is to their blindness, mortals owe much of their happiness, and it was the cloud of uncertainty, which hung over their fate, and the ignorance in which they lived of their "last time" of meeting, which kept Benson and Emma Gray alive, on the verge of certain misery and eternal separation; every evening when they parted, the dread and apprehension, that the morrow might bring the too sure destruction of their happiness, filled their minds; but they knew not the day. The period, although inevitable, was not fixed; and Hope, which nature has so kindly planted in our hearts, still buoyed them up.

The case of these lovers was a singular one. Had they been poor, and fond, in opposition to the will and wishes of their relations, the matter would have had nothing of novelty to recommend it; but they were differently situated. Emma's aunt and Emma's uncle, both loved, and admired, and esteemed Benson. They felt it quite natural, that Emma should admire, and esteem, and love him too; and felt besides that it was quite impossible for them to be angry with her, for participating in their own sentiments towards the young man, which were

founded upon his merit, his modesty, his ingenuousness, and his good principle; but they had no alternative; they were bound to enforce one of those conditions, which ought never to be binding, and were compelled to save the property of their ward, by sacrificing her happiness.

It must be admitted, that Emma was not enough of an enthusiast, to relinquish all her fortune, and fly from the world, with her beloved Frederick, into a cottage, to live upon love. A cottage would have satisfied her utmost ambition, but it must have been a cottage *ornée*, with doors to shut, and curtains to draw—rooms carpeted, and opening, perhaps, into a small conservatory, and a *boudoir*, and it might be a small library; in short, she had somewhat more common sense and less romance than might have been looked for, in an ardent admirer of genius and talent generally, and in the person of Mr. Frederick Benson particularly; owing perhaps to having contemplated the ruinous effects upon a near connection of her own, of one of those marriages upon impulse, where passion gets the mastery of reason, the fruits of which turn out, when the ardour of personal affection has subsided, to be misery

discontent, wretchedness, and in nine cases out of ten, eventual criminality.

Emma was sincerely, but not blindly attached to her lover: she saw his merits, and appreciated them, perhaps somewhat too highly: still she felt convinced, in the present stage of his professional career, it would be madness to permit him to hope to marry her; one of the first results of such a step, being the dispossessing herself of the fortune absolutely necessary to their existence: but if not idly enthusiastic, she was affectionately sanguine, and looked forward to the period in his life, when he should take his place amongst the rich and eminent of our native artists, and under the powerful patronage of his liberal countrymen, be enabled, without the aid of her property, to live as she wished him to live, and support a family, by the exercise of his delightful and honourable profession, and when it would be her pride and happiness to share his fortunes, and look back with pleasure and satisfaction upon the sacrifice she had made, to obtain so enviable a station.

In fact, Emma hoped even more, for she knew not the real character of her coming swain. She had associated many disagreeables in her mind,

with the name of Gervase Skinner; but she had yet to learn that she had no chance of liberal treatment, in a financial sense of the word, from her intended. The strict letter of the will, most strictly interpreted, must be fulfilled; and no soothing or softening, would be available with Gervase, especially after the heavy disbursements he had been compelled to make, in hopes of concealing his mal-practices in London. Emma, however, possessed that patient resignation, that consistent firmness, which invariably characterize a girl of virtue and sincerity. Her mind was already made up; and although years might roll on, and the bloom on her cheek might fade, and the young hopes of her heart be deferred; she knew herself, and felt satisfied that she could patiently wait for the time, when prudence would permit of her uniting her fate to that of Frederick Benson, without a sigh, without a murmur: so that, as far as the positive defeat of Skinner's pretensions, and the negative success of declining to marry him, she was pretty certain she had gone the whole length of giving up her fortune for Benson's sake; but she had also resolved not to permit him to injure his, for her's.

To the old people, however, her resolution had not been explicitly imparted, although their own observations, and the kind assisting hints of certain virgins in their second half century, and others of a similarly obliging turn of mind, in the vicinity, had long before, led them to expect a violent opposition to the fulfilment of the contract; and they talked it over, and put the matter in every possible way, in hopes of avoiding the necessity of separating their niece from the man whom she loved, and they esteemed; but vainly, for in their warmest moments, and in the extremity of their desire to settle Emma comfortably with Benson, they never once entertained the notion of relinquishing her pretty property.

It may easily be conceived that the life of the lovers was any thing but tranquil or agreeable: each morning that they met, each evening that they parted, might be the last of their intercourse; and every carriage that rattled through the quiet streets of the antiquated city, where they lived, sounded like the dreadful announcement of the spoiler's approach.

Meanwhile, Benson, whose professional reputation was increasing, found a proportionate

increase of employment. The works which he had exhibited in London during the preceding spring, had obtained high approbation and ready purchasers, and two or three noblemen were actually "racing" to obtain some of his productions. He had already concluded his labours for the present year, and proposed, whenever Skinner should arrive, to proceed to town, for the double purpose of avoiding all the miseries which a triumphant rival's appearance could not fail to inflict, and of arranging about the disposal of the drawings he had already made, and his engagements to make more.

There is no stimulus to action, a thousandth part so powerful as love returned. Day after day, night after night, did Benson toil and labour to render himself worthy of his Emma's affections; new genius seemed to animate his designs; his colours beamed with fresh brightness, while he strove to place himself at once high in the esteem of his beloved, and in the foremost rank of the profession he had selected. Before he knew her, his industry was not remarkable, his sketches were rarely finished, his designs seldom perfected; but now a thousand feelings, all centering in his Emma, animated and

excited him, and called into play genius and talent, together with—which seldom are their concomitants—industry and application.

It was at this period, as the reader may recollect, just at the end of Lent, and within a week, or so, of Easter, that our friend Gervase quitted London, Amelrosa, and all his difficulties, for the scene of happiness which it was his destiny to mar. Emma's uncle received a letter announcing his departure, and fixing the day of his arrival, for the Friday next ensuing; the hour even was named, and was conveniently adapted for dining with his fair one—a measure evidently preservative of the sum which refreshment on the road that day would have required.

The blow then had fallen—the doubts were all converted into certainty—the distant vision into a rapidly approaching reality. Benson knew what had occurred, even before Emma could speak, and when he went to "tea" at her uncle's, the countenances of the whole party expressed most forcibly, the general dissatisfaction of all persons composing it, at the sad condition of old Gray's will, and the cruel completion of his design so near at hand.

As yet, Benson was not aware of the extent of Emma's determination in regard to the affair; nor indeed did he fancy her capable of such a resolution as that which she had formed; but she felt, as the period for decision approached, that it would be not only merciful to him to end his doubts, but assuredly more indicative of the singleness of her feelings towards him, to make known her determination before she saw Mr. Skinner, so that it might be manifest to Benson, that no personal dislike of her intended husband after having made his acquaintance, no distaste or disappointment had induced her to reject him; but that she was acted upon, solely by her affection for her lover, and that she disdained any other alliance, however handsome or amiable the suitor, and however advantageous the circumstances connected with it—for the sake of Frederick alone.

Long engagements entered into early in life, sometimes turn out unsatisfactorily, and even unhappily; yet this seldom occurs on the woman's side: her love is fixed and settled, and when her faith *is* plighted, years of trial, of sorrow, and of absence, shake it not;—but man, led by a sudden impulse to a similar pledge,

begins not unfrequently to waver with time and circumstances; and as he sees the charms of his betrothed, fade under the influence of suspense or time, he learns to regret the oath he has registered, and when the looked-for period of happiness comes, he finds the transports of other years worn down to something like indifference, and the fulfilment of his vow becomes more a matter of duty, than an affair of the heart.

But this was not the season for reflection with either Frederick Benson or Emma Gray, and when on this evening she sought and found an opportunity of speaking with him alone, and disclosed to him her fixed determination never to marry, unless she married *him*; his rapturous echo to her vow of constancy thrilled like sweet music on her anxious ears, and the treaty of fidelity was sealed with a kiss of affection as pure and as ardent as ever animated human hearts.

It must be confessed that Benson's surprise was excessive when he found himself thus put in actual possession of Emma's heart; for although she had a thousand times declared her intention of never marrying, unless she married

him; still those declarations were so playful, and generally accompanied by a laugh, that the sensitive Benson never founded any serious expectation upon their stability. Now, however, the case was different, and although the summit of all his hopes and wishes appeared far distant and away, still it beamed before him, and all the difficulties of its ascent were, as he felt, surmountable by the exertion of his own superior talent.

Emma, when she resolved upon the step to which her affection and candour had incited her, resolved also upon the line of conduct which she should adopt towards Skinner. He had been the friend of her father, and she felt that any thing like disrespectful rejection of an offer made under the sanction of that father, however hateful its acceptance would be, would in fact evince a disrespect towards the memory of her parent. She therefore settled in her mind, to receive the matured Gervase warmly and cordially in her *amicable* capacity: and by her friendly manner, and respectful bearing towards him, induce, if possible, a confidence, which, when once established, might lead to a dispassionate explanation of her actual situation and intentions; first per-

haps putting her case hypothetically, to feel her way; and afterwards, as it might be, according to circumstances, confessing herself the heroine of her own tale. In short, the unsophisticated Emma, as I have before said, was blest with a considerable portion of that rare and valuable commodity, good common sense; and however much the fly-away sentimentalists, who profess to live upon zephyrs and die for rose-buds, may laugh at her want of romance, it may safely be relied upon, that for the real and rational enjoyment of our probationary period of existence in this world, good-sense and good humour are essential ingredients of the female character. Emma possessed these, and with these, every right feeling of which the human heart is capable.

But before Skinner reaches the "time and place," when and where Emma's mode of treatment is to be tried, he has, as my readers may remember, a journey to make, which, though neither very long, nor very tedious, may perhaps, in the ordinary course of things, produce an incident or two, for the sake of hearing which, it may be worth while to join him on the road, before he has the advantage of falling in

with his servant; and while our rustic lovers are counting the hours until his arrival, an event on which, so much, conducive to the acceleration or delay of their happiness, depended.

The morning was bright, clear, and frosty, as Gervase in his travelling carriage quitted the fertile valley, in which, wrapped in smoke, London rears its "column to the skies;" but he turned not on the summit of the last hill to take his leave of it, and think that Amelrosa still was there. The recollection of Mr. Screwman and Lyon's Inn was strong in his mind, without needing the smallest aid of scenery to refresh it; but the sentimental part of his love for Mrs. Fuggleston, had evaporated, while the memory of his departed guineas, filled him with sorrow and regret. Having no servant with him, Skinner, for the first stage out of town, where upon the gates of "every trust," one sees the anomaly of "no trust" written, and at which the order to "pay back," was disregarded and rejected by the toll-keepers, had a regular squabble for three-pences; delaying himself to read the whole of the board displayed at the toll-gate, measuring seven feet six by five feet four, filled with a minute description of every sort of

coach, chariot, landau, Berlin chaise, chair, calash, drawn by six horses or other cattle, four horses or other cattle, and so on, and every waggon, wain, dray, car, cart, or such like carriage, which is liable to toll; meaning in the gross and in common sense and parlance, every sort of vehicle imaginable; so that he might ascertain that there was nothing like collusion between the post-boy and the collector, before he disbursed his sixpence; all of which he did "upon principle," believing in his heart that all post-boys are cheats, and that all turnpike-men, without exception, are rogues and vagabonds of the most depraved possible character.

The details of every little disagreement which occurred, and every bickering which took place during the first day's journey, would not amuse, even if it should instruct, my readers. The general effect of Skinner's economy, however, may be deduced from the fact, that after twelve hours travelling on roads like bowling greens, he had "made," to use a nautical phrase, little more than eighty miles, and started from somewhere about the eighty-second mile at half-past seven, (not having stopped to eat either lunch-

eon or dinner,) for a twelve mile stage, at the end of which he meant to conclude his day's progress, and enjoy the equivocal meal which might serve as dinner and supper together, and only be charged as the latter.

The night was darkish, but the post-boy did not wish for lights; and as Skinner, "upon principle," never travelled with any, unless the driver particularly desired it, and as, in fact, there were no candles in the lamps, the duskiness of the evening remained unrelieved by any illumination of the carriage, and Skinner proceeded, quite pleased at having reached a region where robbery was a crime unheard of, and where even the turnpike-men themselves had no need to stop the even tenor of his way.

Thus had my hero journeyed some seven miles, when a sudden crack, followed by a halting kind of motion, on one side of the carriage, induced him to let down one of the front glasses and call to the post-boy, who was, it should seem, asleep upon his horse, to whom he had implicitly entrusted his own fate and that of Skinner. At all events he was perfectly unconscious of the accident which had occurred, and which proved, upon as clear an examination as a dark

night afforded, to be neither more nor less than the demolition of the near hind wheel; one of the fellies had split; the tire had followed its example, and one or two of the spokes had, during the minute or two immediately succeeding the "decomposition" of the adjacent parts, been so seriously injured, as at once to preclude the possibility of stirring a foot until the damage was repaired.

"The deuce take the wheel," said Skinner; "they told me these wheels would not last long, and they have been a long journey since, and —how stupid—what's to be done, boy?"

"I don't know, Sir," replied the lad (who was a little stumpy old fellow of sixty); "there ben't no kind of wheelers ony where hereabout, nor no inn short of four miles."

"This is an extremely disagreeable adventure," said my hero: "are there any coaches likely to pass, that might pick one up?"

"None, as I know of," said the boy, "afore to-morrow morning early; the down coaches and mail will be by here about six o'clock or thereaway."

"And the carriage cannot be made moveable?" asked Skinner.

"Not wiout wheels, I take it," replied the driver.

"What's the matter here?" said a voice, the owner of which was nearly invisible.

"A bit of a break down," said the driver.

Skinner instinctively withdrew his purse from his pocket, and stuffed it under one of the arms of his great coat, having resolved, upon the instant, that the invisible speaker would soon declare himself a robber.

"And can't ye get on?" said the invisible visitor.

"Not a foot until the wheel is mended, Sir," said Skinner, in his mildest tone and liveliest manner.

"In that case, Sir," said the stranger, "you had better come with me to my master's house, where you see those lights," added he, pointing.

"I thank you, Sir," said Skinner.

"I am waiting down here, Sir," continued the man, "for a gentleman who is to come by one of the coaches out of Cheshire, this evening; but if you please just to take whatever things you may want out of the carriage, I can step up to the house with you, Sir; for my master would be very angry, if I suffered a

gentleman to be inconvenienced for a night's lodging under the circumstances."

"You are very good, my friend," said Skinner, with a patronizing air, having recovered from his first apprehension; "who is your master?"

"Mr. Wilson, Sir," said the man; "the boy knows my master—don't you?"

"Aye, bless his honour," said the boy, "every body knows he, and a mort of good he does round about these parts."

"Really!" said Gervase, anticipating a *gratis* supper, lodging, and breakfast. "I see no way of getting on with the carriage, and the night is dark and cold for walking—if I thought I should not intrude—I——"

"I am sure ye won't, Sir," said the man, "else I should not say so."

"In that case, I shall I think avail myself of your offer," said Skinner; "if a similar accident had occurred in the neighbourhood of my place, at Bagsden, I know I should have received a stranger with every attention, and I shall take the liberty of judging of Mr. Wilson's feelings by my own."

"Hand out the things, boy," said Anderson,

for such was the name of the hospitable domestic.

"A dressing case, sac-de-nuit, and small portmanteau," said Skinner; "the things in the seat, may I suppose remain."

"I'll put the carriage safe, Sir," said the boy, "and send for the wheel and some one to take it into town, in an hour at farthest; and I suppose I had better order horses out here for you in the morning, when they bring out the wheel, Sir?"

"If you please," said Skinner; "and I'll settle about your horses with the other boy."

This, Skinner said, avowedly, because it was dark and cold, and Anderson had indicated that he was in a hurry to get up to the house; but, in fact, even the procrastination of a payment, however small, was pleasureable to Gervase, and he felt he had achieved something when the man acceded, not too willingly, it must be confessed, to the proposed arrangement.

"I beg your pardon, Sir," said Anderson, taking up the luggage, "for hurrying you; but as I said before, I am waiting here to receive a gentleman, who is coming to my master's

with a friend, and I am afraid of missing the coach, or else I would not trouble you to step on so quick."

"Don't mention it," said Skinner, "I really am very much obliged by this considerate conduct;" and thus in short acknowledgments and hurried paces they reached the mansion of Mr. Wilson, which presented a handsome front, as to size; for the darkness of the evening prevented Skinner making out many of the details.

Anderson tripped up a flight of stone steps which led to the hall-door, and having rung, the portal, after some unboltings and unlockings, was opened by another male servant, to whom Anderson gave the trunk, and of whom he inquired if his master had come in.

"No," said the other servant, "but he won't be long."

"Show this gentleman into the parlour," said Anderson, in a tone of authority, which marked his importance in the family; "I cannot stop a minute; but you'll have the goodness, perhaps, Sir," added he, turning to Skinner, "to explain the accident to my master yourself?"

Saying which, Anderson bounded down the

steps to resume his position at the end of the avenue, and Skinner was ushered into a large, darkish looking parlour, at the dimly burning fire of which, were seated two elderly gentlemen, who rose immediately upon my hero's entrance, and saluted him most courteously.

"Have I the pleasure," said Skinner, "of addressing Mr. Wilson?"

"No, Sir," said one of the elderly gentlemen, "he is not here; we should not be sitting so near the fire if he was."

"I have a little explanation to make to him," said Skinner, "and many apologies for the intrusion——"

"Ha! ha! ha!" said the graver gentleman of the two, "you had better make no apologies to him—when did you come in?"

"Just now, Sir," said Skinner, who did not exactly comprehend what was going forward.

"And pray, my good fellow," said the other gentleman, "when do you expect to get out again?"

"Out, Sir," said Skinner, "why, to-morrow I purpose continuing my journey."

"That's very likely indeed," replied the

grave gentleman—"didn't Anderson come up with you?"

"Anderson certainly brought me here," faltered Skinner.

"Why, then, Sir," said the other gentleman, "you will never see the outside of this house so long as you live."

"Sir!" said Skinner.

"It is true, Sir," replied his companion—"you appear to be quite a stranger to our ways—did you come here alone?"

"No, Sir," said Skinner, "I told you that a man of the name of Anderson brought me here."

"Anderson," said the gentleman to his friend, "that's it, another victim."

"I am going down to the North, and met with an accident to my carriage, and——"

"That, Sir, is a fudge," said the other elderly gentleman: "we are what may be called up to that: if you believe that any accident happened to your carriage, you are a dupe—a mere dunce—and you cannot make us believe it."

"But, Sir," said Skinner, somewhat more

earnestly, and half angry—" why should I be doubted ?"

" Because, Sir," replied his friend, " no man's carriage ever breaks down here accidentally—I came here ; my carriage broke down : but it was done on purpose—Wilson, as he calls himself is no Wilson, he is the Emperor of Morocco, Sir, who has established himself here for the persecution of all Christians, and I presume you are one."

" I hold that faith, Sir," said Skinner.

" Then, Sir, mark my words," said the old gentleman—" from out of this house you will never go alive. My friend and I know the fact, unhappily for ourselves ; there is no prison so strong, no fastness so secure as this, and the barriers it presents are insurmountable ; but, Sir, permit me in courtesy to say, that if you have any property with you, we will try to save it for you."

" Save my property—how, Sir," said Skinner, " where am I then ?"

" In a fortress, Sir, of incalculable strength, if you did but know it," replied his new friend, " where I have lingered two and thirty years."

Skinner stared ; but all his thoughts reverting

to his worldly goods, he overlooked the extraordinary assertion of his new friend, and said, "But, Sir, you are joking; I *have* some property in a dressing case in the hall, which I—but—do you—are'nt you joking—this is Mr. Wilson's house?"

"That, Sir, is the name by which the monster passes in the neighbourhood; but he is a robber of the vilest nature, and I repeat, if you have any property, I'll go and put it in a secure place for you—trust to me for that."

Saying which, the more sprightly old gentleman of the two, quitted the room.

Skinner stared at what was going forward, and began to believe that he had been entrapped by Anderson, into a den of cut-throats.

"I see you are amazed at our ways, Sir," said his companion; "but I am glad you are come amongst us; we are all prisoners, Sir, but we have our amusements; besides which, it is pleasant to have companions in our sorrows:—If we cannot divide distances, as the Irishman did, by making a journey of fourteen miles, by two persons, only seven miles a piece, still grief is lightened by the numbers who are to bear it."

"But, Sir," said Skinner, overcome by the playfulness of his companion, "you talk of prisoners, what is it you mean? you talk of amusements ——"

"Yes, Sir," replied the old gentleman, "we play marbles at times upon the tables; but not upon the ground, for fear of wearing out the knees of our breeches."

"Odd amusement, Sir," said Skinner; "do you course, or hunt, or shoot?"

"No, Sir," said the gentleman, "we never shoot—for which there are three reasons, as far as I am personally concerned—the first is, I never did shoot—the second is, I never could shoot—and the third is, they won't let me have a gun."

"But, Sir," said Gervase, coaxingly, "you have carried the joke quite far enough—now—do be good enough to tell me—what is the meaning of this conduct? I have been brought here to a gentleman's house, where it seems to be the fashion to play off hoaxes—there are several waggish noblemen in existence, of whom I have heard sundry comical stories, and perhaps I may now be the victim of some exceedingly droll contriv-

ance; but, do you know, you will do me a great favour, by giving me some little explanation."

"Sir," said the old gentleman, "after such an appeal, I should consider myself unworthy the character I hope always to maintain in the world, if I hesitated a moment longer in throwing off all disguise, and putting you at your ease upon the subject of your present situation."

"Sir," said Skinner, "I really am obliged to you; and whatever the humour of our host may be, just put me *au fait*, and I will chime in to any little folly, if not over extravagant, to keep up the joke."

"You are just the man after my own heart," said the old gentleman, "and therefore I shall make no mystery about it. You are acquainted, I presume, with all the dreadful proceedings connected with the French Revolution, in which my lamented father lost his life, and you may easily collect from those occurrences, the malignant nature of a party raised against the *ancien regime*—if you are aware of those events, I say, there will be no difficulty in convincing you of the hateful character of Robespierre—do you see, Sir?"

"I do," said Skinner, "I see, and I hear, but you will perhaps excuse me, if I add, that I do not understand."

"I will enlighten you, Sir," said the old gentleman: "there is a difficulty and delicacy in introducing myself to you; but I trust to your plain—yet honest face, and I am myself so vitally connected with the history of Modern Europe, that you will be glad to be known to me. In confidence, then, I am the rightful King of France, at this moment; you have heard of the Dauphin, son of the martyred Louis seize. I am that individual, and although I may be unable to speak to you in English, I trust that you understand my language sufficiently to be interested in my fate."

"Dauphin, Sir! Consider your age, Sir," said Skinner. "French, Sir—English, Sir—why, Sir, you are speaking as good English at this moment, as ever I heard in my life."

"Am I, miscreant!" cried the old man, "where is my sceptre? By the garlic and gargle of Henry the fourth, I never spoke English in my life, nor ever will so long as I breathe, whatever I may do afterwards," saying which, the *soi-disant* Dauphin seized the

poker, and in all probability would have annihilated my hero, had not the door, opportunely opening, presented to his view Mr. Wilson himself.

"Sir!" said Wilson, in a tone of thunder, at the same time elevating his right hand authoritatively. The poker fell quiescent at the old man's side, and the servant who had received Skinner on his arrival, being behind Mr. Wilson, advanced, took his Gallic Majesty by the arm, and gently walked him out of the apartment.

This scene, brief and stormy as it had been, relieved Skinner's rising fear as to the character of the house into which he had gotten, and as to the disposition of the master of it; for it was in a moment made evident, that he was the guest of some eminent "mad doctor," whose arrival at home would afford him a speedy opportunity of explaining the cause of his somewhat unseasonable visit.

"Well, Sir," said Wilson, as soon as the door was closed, "and how are *you*—pretty well?"

"Very well, I thank you, Sir," said Skinner, somewhat surprised at the familiar manner in

which he was accosted by a perfect stranger; "I ought I believe to make some apologies for the intrusion ——"

"None, none in the least," said Wilson, "you found no inconvenience from the journey, —no heat—no worry?"

"None, I thank you, Sir, except," said Skinner, "the accident to the wheel of my carriage."

"Ah! that was very bad, was it?" said Wilson.

"Perhaps, Sir," said Skinner, "Mr. Anderson has explained who I am, I——"

"Ay, ay, I know who you are, Sir," said Wilson, "let me just feel your pulse."

"My pulse, Sir," said Skinner, "I have nothing the matter with me, I——"

"Come, Sir, no nonsense," said Wilson, "give me your hand."

"But, Sir," said Skinner, "you are not aware how I got here; I am on my way to enter into a matrimonial engagement in the north, and travelling with that intention, the wheel of my carriage——"

"Ay, ay, very well, that will do," said Wilson, "don't talk, my good friend—it will

worry you—you shall have a comfortable basin of water gruel, presently, and go to bed—you will be better in the morning."

"Better, Sir, I tell you I am quite well; but you don't know me—my name is Skinner, of Bagsden Parva, in the county of Somerset, and I——"

"You talk too fast," said Wilson, "so, your name is Skinner, is it? and you are going to be married, are you? I tell you one thing, my fine fellow, you have got too much hair upon your head to be married with," saying which, Wilson proceeded to ring the bell.

"Too much hair, Mr. Wilson!" exclaimed Skinner, who had been successively, and in some degree successfully, applying himself for the last six months to Messrs. Rowland, Atkinson, Johnson, Colley, and fifty other ingenious artists, in the same line, to procure from their repertories and repositories, different bottles of their Macassar, Stiracias, dyes and greases, in order to make a head fit for the lover of a girl of twenty; and whose horror at the denunciation just pronounced by the mistaken mad doctor, was indescribable.

"Sir!" exclaimed he—"Mr. Wilson, listen to me, Sir; I *will* be heard."

"I'll take care you shall not, Mr. Buckeridge," said the doctor.

"Buckeridge, Buckeridge, me, no, Buckeridges," cried my hero. "I tell you I am Gervase Skinner, of Bagsden Parva, in the county of Somerset, Esq. going on a matrimonial excursion to the north; that the wheel of my carriage——"

"You had better be quiet, Sir," said Wilson, and turning to the man, who had received Skinner from Anderson's hands at the door, he proceeded to inquire if Wilkes was in the way? Being answered in the affirmative, he was speedily sent for, and Skinner, after several attempts, not the most gentle in the world, at resistance, was hurried up stairs, to an apartment at the back of the building, where he underwent the discipline of the house, and in less than ten minutes, was shorn as close as was ever innocent sheep, the cut being made specially peculiar, in order to mark to the neighbourhood, who were apprized of its nature and character, that the wearer, whoever he might be, had escaped from the asylum, of which our friend Wilson was the head.

It is useless to attempt to describe the violence of Skinner's opposition to the spoliation of his Brutus, or the vehemence with which he denied the fact of being Mr. Buckeridge; all his exertions were vain, superior force overcame his strugglings, and after having performed their arduous duty, Wilson committed Mr. Skinner to the charge of one of the keepers, while he retired to his own apartments, to take a comfortable bit of supper, with Mrs. W., and his fair daughter.

It would not, I think, be particularly satisfactory to my readers, to be made acquainted with the private conversation, which passed in the sanctum of Mr. Wilson, which was detached from the main building of the asylum, and was in fact, rather a cottage contiguous to, than forming any integral part of it. There, after the painful labours of the day, when the unhappy patients committed to his charge, had been driven to their resting places for the night, and consigned to the care of the subordinates, the wearied principal abandoned himself to the endearing comforts of domestic life, and there his lady and his amiable daughter received the visits of

such neighbours as were within reach of their retreat.

On the evening in question, Mr. Wilson, somewhat anxious to be made acquainted with any directions which Anderson might have received about Mr. Buckeridge, a gentleman of considerable fortune, who, like many other gentlemen, in similar circumstances, was labouring under an aberration of intellect, and who, as Wilson believed, had that evening been carefully cropped, to the regulation cut, washed, dried, and put to bed in his house, under his own special superintendence; sent for the said Anderson, in order to make the necessary inquiries; for it should be known that a relation of Mr. Buckeridge had undertaken to accompany him in the stage coach from Chester, towards London, and to *drop him* at the end of Wilson's avenue, Anderson having received his instructions to wait there, and receive him, and impress him with the belief, that he was on his way to visit a friend, for whom he had always expressed a great partiality, and to whose house his kind companion in the coach, had persuaded him he was going, in order to wheedle

him into the clutches of the eminent practitioner Wilson.

Accordingly, after some gentle converse with Mrs. W. and Anna Maria, the superintendent was informed that Anderson was still out, which, as it waxed late for lunatic hours, somewhat surprised and a little annoyed the head of the house; however, a glass of mild rum punch, brewed by the fair hands of the gentle Anna Maria, had scarcely passed the superintendent's lips, when a gentle tap at the drawing-room door, gave notice of an arrival, and upon the due permission to enter, being given, Anderson appeared.

"Well, Anderson, where have you been so late?" said Wilson.

"Waiting, Sir, for the Chester coach," said Anderson; "but they are all by now—no more till the morning."

"What, did you expect any luggage, or any thing?" asked Wilson.

"No, Sir," said Anderson, "I was waiting for Mr. Buckeridge, you know, till my feet are near bitten off my ancles with the cold."

"Mr. Buckeridge!" said Wilson, "dear me,

how strange! Why Mr. Buckeridge has been here these two hours; he has been cropped, mopped, washed, dried, and put to bed in a long shirt in number 34, up stairs with the bars.

"Dear heart, Sir," said Anderson, "I did not know that—how should I?—nobody told me; and there have I been waiting all this time for nothing. When do you say he came, Sir?"

"Came! why two hours ago," said Wilson; "I understand you brought him up yourself."

"Not I, Sir," said Anderson, "I cannot think—oh!" added he, "I tell you, then, I dare say how this has happened."

"You are cold, Anderson," said Mrs. Wilson, interrupting him—"here, Anna Maria, give him a glass of your pa's old rum."

"Thank ye, miss," said Anderson, bowing, as the pretty girl poured him out a glass full of the prescribed spirit; "your health, Ma'am—your health, Miss—my sarvice, Sir. I tell you, Sir, how it must have been—Wilkes, or some one else, must have got hold of him, while I stepped up with that gentleman, whose carriage broke down."

"Gentleman!" cried Wilson, "what gentleman?"

"The gentleman with the bushy head of hair," said Anderson; "Mr. Skinner, from Somersetshire."

"Who?" exclaimed Wilson—"hair!—Skinner! What do you mean—I'm ruined—I see it all in a moment——somebody else."

"The gentleman whose carriage broke down, and I——"

"What the devil shall I do?" said the superintendent.

"What *has* happened?" exclaimed the superintendent's lady.

"I've clipped, washed, and waistcoated a sane man by mistake."

"I dare say he's mad enough by this time," said Anderson. "I'll tell you all about it, Sir."

"Not one moment must be lost," cried Wilson, "my hat—a lanthorn—the key—Anderson, here—tell me all as we go."

"But mayn't we hear?" said Mrs. Wilson.

"I'll tell you all when I come back; don't worry; what's done, cannot be undone:—from Somersetshire, do you say, eh, Anderson?"

"Of Bagsden in that county, I think," replied Anderson.

"The same—the same—come along;" and away went the master and man, the former infinitely nearer madness than his unfortunate captive, who had been during his incarceration refused every comfort and necessary of life, and who, wasted by anger, agitation, and hunger, had actually fallen asleep before his liberators arrived.

CHAPTER VII.

But REASON the head-dress so awkwardly wore,
That Beauty now liked him still less than before.
THOMAS MOORE.

To describe the confusion occasioned by the discovery of the deplorable mistake, by which Gervase had been so woefully discomfited, or to depict the groupe, as they appeared at the cottage, when my hero was re-invested with the dress in which he had entered the house, and conveyed under feelings of irritation, little short of the disorder with which he had been previously declared to be afflicted, into Mr. Wilson's own snuggery, would require the pen of a Smollett, or the pencil of a Hogarth. The endeavour to appear in some

degree reconciled to his fate, before Mrs. Wilson and her daughter; the horrid apprehension with which he raised his eyes towards a looking glass; the anxiety to eat and drink, and the fear of compromising his action for damages, which he meditated; his natural turn for the absurd, and his consciousness of the absolute farcicality of his adventure, corrected by the just and dignified feelings of outraged respect and propriety—made it altogether a "scene."

Nothing to be sure could equal the distress of Mr. Wilson; nothing could compare with the assiduity and civility of his lady and Anna Maria, who selected all the best bits for their victim; made him the nicest possible punch, and before the repast, showed him the most comfortable bed-room, in hopes of softening down his ire, which every now and then burst forth, especially whenever he happened to pass his hand over his cropped head; however, all that could be said, all that could be done, could not restore the ravished curls, the ruined ringlets; and as the fire cheered, the supper nourished, and Anna Maria's pleasing punch soothed him, Skinner himself began rather to smile at his sorrows, and while looking at

Miss Wilson, felt almost sorry that he had confessed the object of his visit to the north to be matrimonial; so smitten was he with her excessive good nature, and the kind manner in which she assured him, as their friendship matured, that she did not think a crop disfigured him at all.

Such is the power of female persuasion, that Skinner, when told this by the pure lips of Miss Wilson, would, I think, have taken it as a fact, had not the six-and-eightpenny reflection that he had spent divers and sundry sums of money for the purchase of articles to perfect the growth of the rich harvest, which Wilson's scissors had so abruptly reaped, crossed his mind.

Time—which flies every where, (even in the private part of a private mad-house,) when the sun has set, and the bright eyes of woman have risen to their zenith—Time, I say, flew so rapidly, after Gervase's restoration to rational society, that it was far past midnight before he had taken leave of the female W.'s, and been ushered to his snug and comfortable dormitory, where neatness and comfort reigned

and ruled, and where he beheld placed ready for his use, his *sac de nuit*, and his portmanteau.

"I believe," said he, inquiringly, "there *is* a dressing-case ——?"

"No, Sir, there was nothing else in the hall," said Anderson, who having been the innocent cause of my hero's misfortune, appeared doubly anxious and assiduous in his service at present. "I fancy you must have taken that to——"

"Taken, not I," said Skinner, a sudden recollection flashing into his mind—"I dare say one of the gentlemen, to whom I was introduced in the parlour, took it, for, under a very foolish impression, one indeed I am ashamed almost now to admit, I accepted his voluntary services to secure my property."

Wilson's look at Anderson, spoke daggers to Skinner. Not Malcolm's brow to the penetrating eye of Macduff, could have been more eloquently convincing than this to my hero, that his dressing case, its silver furniture, its razors, brushes, bottles, screws and scissors, were all gone "at one fell swoop;" the elderly gentleman

who had proffered his services on the occasion, was as mild and as meek as a lamb, but cunning withal, and having a fancy that he had been robbed of all his property, had the disease of restitution strong upon him, and whenever he could lay his hands upon any moveable of value, away from the eye of the "master," that surely did he appropriate to himself. Next it was to be seen how he had disposed of it, because, in addition to the desire of appropriation, that of destruction seemed to govern him.

In Wilson's mad-house search was instantly made for Skinner's dressing case: the elderly gentleman was questioned—he knew nothing of it, nor would any thing further have been discovered that night, had not Anderson proceeded to the hall, where the other articles had been placed, and there found two or three remnants of the rosewood which once formed the box; thus satisfied, mild threats, and that gentle discipline which the alterative system of the asylum prescribed, produced from the hiding-place of the suspected veteran, some part of the contents, all broken and destroyed, together with a small yet snug horde of bank-notes, which Skinner had

deposited under the silver shaving box, and which when discovered, were found torn into the smallest possible pieces: the value luckily was not great, but the inconvenience occasioned by their present loss promised not to be trifling. The cutlery part of my hero's apparatus, was all found untouched in a heap, under a mat; the patient having sufficient method in his madness, carefully to hide the implements for the possession of which he knew he should be severely punished, had they been found about his person when he retired to rest.

The measure of poor Skinner's woe appeared to be nearly full, when the announcement of the destruction which had taken place was made to him. His spirits experienced, however, a considerable revival, when Wilson begged him to set his mind at rest about the damage, as he should beg leave to present him the next day with the handsomest dressing case he could purchase: this was something, and the manner in which it was offered, and the appearance of the distress which he had unintentionally occasioned, mollified his anger and subdued his feelings; so that he parted for the night, from his really kind and

unintentionally cruel, yet involuntary host, with a shake of the hand, which amounted to something very like cordiality.

The appearance of a theatre, (as Skinner knew) before the curtain, and behind the scenes, is strangely different; and if he had beheld the Wilson family at their re-union, after he had been for the second time that night, horizontally disposed of, he might have found that a difference equally great exists in the exterior and interior of domestic life. It is true, Wilson lamented with his wife and daughter, an accident, which might turn out seriously for himself, and insomuch regretted the unforeseen occurrences of the evening; but no one of the party could help laughing (in a subdued tone, I admit) at the absurd and almost unnatural combination of events, which had produced an effect so strange and decisive upon the person and property of their unhappy guest. Anna Maria, a good deal released from her apprehensions, began to be satirical, and justified her civil remark to Skinner, that she thought "a crop" became him, by explaining that she meant "as well as any thing else;" and vouched for

her sincerity, when she said, "he looked as well cropped as any other way."

For the present, however, peace and quiet were restored, and the family having, as the sailors say, "made all snug for the night," retired to rest.

However absurd the occurrences I have endeavoured to detail, may appear, and however improbable, (I am not going to vouch for the accuracy of the narrative) they had their origin in that, from which half the events of the world spring—a prepossession, a predetermination, and what on other occasions is called a reputation. Wilson was prepared by circumstances to believe Skinner a mad-man; the moment he saw him, therefore, all his display of rationality went for a further exposure of his insanity. And thus it is in common life: a fool who has gotten the reputation of a wit, talks nonsense, and is listened to with rapture, while a sensible man, "unknown to fame," may endeavour in vain to enlighten and amuse—not his hearers, for hearers he cannot find—the persons who surround him. Colman, than whom never existed a more agreeable companion, was once of a party, to which his reputation

had preceded him, and all the company were on tip-toe to hear his voice. At dinner, the master of the house asked him whether he took currant jelly with his venison. Colman said, "No, I don't like sweet sauce;" a roar of laughter followed, and the lady sitting next me said, "Well, do *you* know, I do *not* see the point of that," as if even Colman always talked Congreve, and replied to matter-of-fact in epigrams.

The same observation holds in repeating a "good thing." The original witticism of an unknown individual goes for nothing; but give it a "local habitation and a name," tell your own joke as having been made by a Spencer, a Jekyll, or a Luttrell, and the point is instantly caught, hailed, and received with rapture; in short, the world regards wit, as old women value plate, if it have not the stamp, they consider it of no value.

All that Gervase Skinner said, was as rational as any thing he, or any other man ever said on any subject; but the impression upon Wilson's mind was made; he believed the mad Buckeridge to be there; therefore all the sanity of the

Somersetshire sage, went for the ravings of the Cheshire lunatic; and as the Frenchman said to his maid servant, "the more fasterer I call, the more slowerer you never come;" the more rational Gervase was, the more perfectly mad the superintendent voted him: thus by a pre-judged, pre-formed opinion, Mr. Skinner, for the sake of avoiding the disbursement of a small sum for the repair of his wheels in London, was mopped, dried, and put to bed, in a long shirt—lost all his hair, his dressing case, and about fifty-five pounds into the bargain.

"Nature's soft nurse" did her best, however, for the victim, and Gervase awoke as well as could be expected, in his remarkably pretty, neat bed-room, from the windows of which, an extremely agreeable, half-spring-like prospect greeted his eyes, and the mistaken birds under the influence of a bright sun were deluded into an almost estival chirping.

Skinner, therefore, consoling himself for what was gone, and yet anxious to retain some show of displeasure, resolved upon quitting the Retreat as soon after breakfast as possible; for, to say truth, the present delay, which would,

as he anticipated, keep his servant an extra day at Litchfield, and most inevitably mar his dinner project with Emma's uncle, was enough to set an irritable economist upon the fidget; but when breakfast was over, and no horses came, and when he saw the beginning of another day at the asylum growing almost to a middle, he resolved, "upon principle," to walk off to the post town, assured that by his personal activity and presence, he could hurry the wheelwright, or coachmaker, or whatever he might be, and urge on the inn-keeper to dispatch the horses.

It was in vain Mr. Wilson endeavoured to convince him, that no time could possibly be saved by his needless peregrination, because it was evident, that even if a carriage could be made to go, according to the doctrines of sundry machinists and philosophers, without horses, it could not be made to go, according to the present system of coachmaking, without wheels; and that, until wheels and horses were brought thither, the vehicle could not stir. This was Greek to Skinner, he felt that his personal weight and influence would do a great deal, and that, in short, having made up his mind to go—go he would—he liked walking, and walked "upon

principle," and all that sort of thing; and an offer of Wilson's gig, or Mary Anne's pony phaeton was rejected, because exercise was wholesome, and he was anxious to walk, and in short was resolved to go on foot. Some parsimonious crotchet, which had doubtless entered his head, drove him onwards to the determination, and accordingly, begging Mr. Wilson would have the goodness to give directions about the carriage, and see that his luggage was sent on, he took leave of a family, his introduction to which had been of the strangest, and his sojourn in which, had been, under all the circumstances, not the most agreeable. They were incidents, however, contingent upon his stinginess, and new proofs, if any were wanting, of the mistaken application of personal economy; for had he merely attended to the suggestion of his coachmaker, as to the state of the wheels, first at Taunton and subsequently in London, none of the unpleasant events of the last twenty-four hours would have occurred; and he would have taken his family dinner with his intended, that day, his carriage sound, his dressing-case safe, his notes undestroyed, and his beauty uninjured.

Clear of the gates of the asylum, Skinner felt at his ease; he breathed the fresh air of heaven independently; and as he mounted the hill which gave him the first prospect of the post town before him, he seemed to overlook the barriers which kept him from his love—he fancied even that the distant line of hills which streaked the horizon with their dusky blue, might overhang the humble dwelling of Emma Gray, and with his game almost in view, he stepped out manfully, and went his way cheerfully.

A thousand feelings filled Skinner, as he saw lying below him like a map, the neat, happy looking town to which he was journeying—a stillness seemed to pervade—a snugness purely English, seemed to characterize it; the square tower of its gothic church, rose amidst the houses, with a sort of parental superiority; and the green fields around it, and the bright sun shining over it, gave a cheerfulness to the scene, which drove my hero into a fit of sentimentalizing; and he began to reflect how complete an epitome of the wide world the small community before him, afforded. The lofty ambition of peers and princes, was found here in the darings of aspiring churchwardens or feasting

overseers: the valour of chiefs, and the wisdom of chancellors, had here their miniature copies in the prowess of militia captains, and the cunning of crafty attorneys. The belles of the court could not be more envious of each other, than the beauties of the country; and all the bickerings, suspicions, loves, hates, jealousies, and affections of the universe, were in as full play in the circumscribed space here at his feet, as ever they were in the busiest scenes of active life. What a work might be made of the secret histories of country towns, if any modern Griselda would take the trouble to unravel their intricacies, and publish them for the benefit of the rising generation.

In the midst of Skinner's reflections, this way tending, his eyes were greeted by the appearance of a cart, in which was deposited a carriage-wheel; attended by two men, and a pair of post-horses, upon one of which sat a post-boy leading the other: instinct told him what the groupe was, and whither the persons who composed it were going, and accordingly, when they came up, he announced himself as the master of the wheel, which in its mended state they were taking to the carriage, and also held out a

promise of special remuneration in case of extraordinary despatch in their proceedings; in which, they, not knowing him, put implicit faith, and were out of sight, in a canter, in less than five minutes.

Gervase, having arranged this matter, began to descend the hill into the town, which, as perhaps the reader may have already observed, I decline naming, for reasons of my own, and which operate in a similar manner upon the name of the provincial city to which he was eventually journeying. As he approached the skirts of the place, the passengers began to thicken, and numerous were the civil salutations which he met with, from the well-conditioned inhabitants, who seemed all good-nature and humility; and Skinner, who was inherently extremely consequential, and particularly fond of the tributary bows of his inferiors, felt his importance rise in proportion to their acknowledgments, so that when he reached the paved street, he had screwed himself up to his highest pitch of consequence, and resolved to impress upon the minds of the landlord of the inn and all his family, a due notion of his real "standing" in society.

Arrived in the "Place," as the French would call it, the eyes of my hero were assailed by the full sized sign of the Saracen's Head, which swung triumphantly across the foot-path, and directed Skinner to his resting-place, where, "upon principle," he meant to have some "luncheon," a meal by him always intended to save dinner; and forthwith did he proceed in his most consequential manner to the entrance of the hostelry—no salutation, however, met him on his arrival, no running waiters or flying chamber maids, whose ears once greeted with the clattering of hoofs and the rattling of wheels, all hurry out to welcome the guest. Skinner as a pedestrian was permitted to enter the hall, and rap against the window of the bar, before he could even attract notice, and when he did catch the eye of the lady of the house, a female dependant was despatched to ask "what he pleased to want."

Skinner's dignity took fire, and he was almost angry at being obliged to recapitulate the whole of the circumstances under which he appeared before the dame, and when he had described the accident, and the wheel, and the horses, all the answer he got was, "I don't know I'm sure, Sir; ring for John Ostler."

"I should like some luncheon, Ma'am," said Skinner, half ironically, "if it were quite convenient."

At the word luncheon, a waiter appeared, who conducted the visitor into a sort of secondary parlour, and inquired what he would choose to eat—being in this particular answered, he shortly re-appeared, and made the ordinary preparations for the gratification of my hero's appetite; but there was evidently lurking in the fellow's mind, something like a suspicion, one can hardly tell why, that Skinner was not what he represented himself to be, grounded, it is most probable, on the fact of his having arrived on foot, while horses were gone to his carriage five miles off. Such, indeed, are the feelings of taste and profit in inn-keepers and their dependants, that a preference under any circumstances given to walking, when riding is to be had, seems an impossibility; and it was not without a caution to the waiter from the landlady, about looking after the spoons, and removing the silver mustard pot, that Gervase got accommodated at all.

The board spread, Skinner, who to maintain his dignity had remained all the time of its preparation covered, standing with his back to the

fire, proceeded to order some malt liquor, which he always drank when travelling, "upon principle," and giving his hat to the waiter, seated himself to begin his gastronomic diversion.

The waiter started back, evidently terrified, and instantly quitted the room; but soon returned, accompanied by his mistress, and behind her, under cover of her expansive person and flowing gown, in less than half a minute he cleared the table of all the knives.

"Stay," said Skinner, "I hav'n't begun, I——"

"I beg your pardon, Sir," said the landlady, in the civilest possible tone, "would not you like to walk up stairs, Sir? we have a much more comfortable room at the back of the house. George, see and get John Ostler in from the stables—would not you like to go up stairs, Sir?"

"No, I thank you," said Skinner, "I am very snug here, this will do—a knife, if you please."

"Sir, hadn't I better cut your meat for you?" said the landlady—"I think you would be more comfortable upstairs, Sir——"

"Not I," said Skinner.

"Pray, Sir," said the woman—"don't be angry with me, Sir—you know Mr. Wilson, Sir?"

"Yes, I do, to my cost," said Skinner. "I came here straight from his house: I did not know how long I might have been kept there, for by a strange mistake they took me to be mad."

"Aye, Sir,"—said the landlady, pale with fear—"that's the way.—Are they ready, George?"

"All ready, Ma'am," said the waiter.

And instantly John Ostler, and a helper or two, entered the room.

"Now, Sir," said the dame, "will you please to go upstairs quietly? You are not the first of Mr. Wilson's gentlemen who have got away, and you'll thank us some day or other for taking care of you."

"Me!" cried Skinner; "why, woman, do you think I am mad?"

"Not mad, my dear Sir," said she; "but Mr. Wilson thinks you so: *we* know him."

"What do you mean?" roared Skinner; "send out those ruffians instantly, or I'll raise an alarm that shall bring the whole town about your

ears," saying which, he jumped up from the table as if to put his threat in execution; when, at a concerted signal, the whole troop of men fell upon him, and secured him by the arms.

"What is the meaning of all this?" cried my hero: "how dare you commit this outrage; I know nothing of Mr. Wilson or his infernal asylum, beyond being entrapped there, and ——"

"That's the way wi' um all," said the ostler, aside to his mistress, "they never owns mad."

"What induces you to think me mad, Ma'am? How did you know any thing about Mr. Wilson? I ——"

"Your hair, Sir," said the landlady, growing bold, as she found her visitor secured, "your hair would never have been cut in that fashion, if you hadn't been at Mr. Wilson's—*we* know what we see, Sir, and locked up you must be, until we send a message off to Mr. Wilson; we knows his old nick."

"Old Nick, indeed!" said Skinner: "this I only tell you—if any one of you here dare to force me into any place, or confine me one

moment, you shall be punished with the utmost rigour of the law."

"Ay, ay," said the ostler, "that's what they write upon the boards agin trespassing; we can't stand no nonsense, Sir. Muster Wilson will be obliged to us, and ——"

"But I shall not, Sir," said Skinner. "If I were not what I represent myself to be, how should I know any thing about the horses you have sent, or the wheel which has been mended? Do I seem mad?"

"Why, Sir," said the landlady, "I cannot say you do; but this may be one of what they call your Lucy's intervals: all I know is, that your hair would never have been nicked if them as knows you better than we do, hadn't thought you mad."

"I tell you," said Skinner, "I warn you that you are subjecting yourselves to difficulties and punishment, by attempting to put a restraint upon me, and you may rely upon it I shall not feel leniently disposed towards you, if after this you persist."

"Well, Sir," said the landlady, "all I have done, is with a view to be serviceable to you, and to your friends, and to Mr. Wilson; and if

you are *not* mad, you will see that I can have no meaning, but to prevent mischief; let the gentleman go, John Ostler. I dare say, Sir," added she, again addressing Skinner, "you will have no objection to let one of us stay with you, till the carriage comes, which you say you expect, and I'm sure I shan't mind the trouble a bit."

Just at this moment a chaise was driven into the yard—ring went the bell, and out flew the waiter; the landlady, however, full of good intentions, budged not; so resolved was she to prevent mischief. In a minute or two, however, the powerful John Ostler re-entered, and proclaimed the moment of Skinner's identification at hand; the driver of the newly arrived chaise, was the post-boy, who had driven my hero the night before, when his wheel was broken, and he could in an instant relieve all their doubts, and clear up all their difficulties.

Skinner was delighted, the landlady consoled, and the boy summoned.

"Is that the gentleman, Sam, whose carriage broke down last night?" said the portly dame to the driver.

"Why," said Sam, "I beg pardon—

but—I—don't know, I don't somehow think it *is*."

"What!" cried Gervase, "not recollect me!——"

"The voice is like," said the post-boy, "but —the gemman last night had a particular bushy head of hair."

"Ay," cried the landlady, "but that you see has been cropped, and might have been done since."

"You stupid fellow," said Skinner; "is there nothing by which you can recognize a person, from whom you have so recently parted as last night, besides his hair?"

"Yes, Sir, there be," said Sam: "if you be the gemman as I drove last night, you'll recollect you owes me nineteen shillings and sixpence for the horses—thirteen miles."

To admit a debt, however trifling, was painful enough to Gervase, and a sort of frugal scruple had arisen in his mind, as to paying the fare of the whole stage, having only travelled a portion of it, and being of course obliged to pay for other horses to complete the distance; indeed, he did not expect to find the same post-boy ready at hand to demand payment, and least of

all anticipated that he would prove so important a personage in the action of the following day.

"I admit the charge, but deny the debt," said Skinner; "however, this is not the time for arguing a question of equity, nor are you the person to contend with. I did *not* pay for the horses certainly, and therefore you see, Ma'am," continued he, addressing his hostess, "your apprehensions on my account and your own are put to rest."

"I'm mighty glad of it, Sir," said the dame, "for if Sam hadn't come in just as he did, it was my firm resolve to have coaxed you into a chaise with John Ostler, and sent you back to the asylum. I hope as it is, you'll forgive me."

"Oh, I never bear malice," said Skinner, "although I want no luncheon now—the worry and agitation have taken away my appetite, so you may take away the rest of the things."

Skinner had in fact satisfied his hunger, by demolishing a huge piece of crust during the early part of the altercation.

"You may give me some ale," continued he; "that is, if you fancy me sufficiently sane to be trusted with a tankard."

And accordingly a copious draught of stout was administered to my hero; the landlady reiterated her apologies; the post-boy received his money, and an additional douceur for his trouble in sending the artificers to the wheel; by which time the carriage arrived, and Gervase, after grumbling at the heavy expense incurred by its repairs, and the additional "milage" which had accrued by the accident, re-seated himself in his chaise, and bade adieu to a district, where his misplaced frugality had met with returns of a more serious nature than usual.

The civility of the landlady, and the humility of John Ostler, made but little impression upon Skinner; who before his departure, wrote to his *friend* Wilson, an account of his mishap, not so much for the purpose of either edifying or amusing the "Superintendant," as to give him the address, to which the promised new dressing case was to be forwarded at the earliest opportunity.

Again then is Skinner on his way to his Emma, and the reader will not I hope be disappointed when he finds, that without further accident, let, or hindrance, the matured lover found his servant at Litchfield, as it had been

appointed, and that by ten o'clock in the evening he reached the home of his intended, where for the moment we leave him, as he was in fact left—alone; since not only the object of his affections, but both her uncle and aunt were "out," at a "rout," having, from the failure of his promise to arrive the day previous, given him up for *that* day, thinking that if he did come, he would arrive before the hour of going to Mrs. Pimpernel's, at whose house the "tea and supper" had been gotten up, for the purpose of introducing Skinner to some of the friends and acquaintances of Emma Gray.

Gervase, however, desired that no stir might be made on his account, and prohibited the servants from sending any intelligence of his arrival to Mrs. P.'s; and having ascertained that cold meat and pickles were attainable where he was, he satisfied nature's cravings gratis, and having washed down his late dinner or early supper with some port wine, established himself in his host's elbow chair, patiently to sit and slumber until the return of the party to their quiet home.

And thus terminated his journey. Whatever troubles had been caused by its performance,

they were now ended; and enthroned in the mansion of the Grays, he felt himself quietly secured from all further worries, with a prospect of free living, for some time to come, and the peaceable possession at the end of a fortnight of the *ultimatum* of all his earthly wishes.

How fully they were realized, I must not presume to anticipate.

CHAPTER VIII.

—— Nor does it nought avail
What season you to drowsy Morpheus give
Of th' ever-varying circle of the day;
Or whether through the tedious winter gloom
You tempt the midnight, or the morning damps.
The body fresh and vigorous from repose
Defies the early fogs: but by the toils
Of wakeful day, exhausted and unstrung,
Weakly resists the night's unwholesome breath.

ARMSTRONG.

SKINNER, established by the fire-side of his future relation, sat waiting for the return of the family from the rural *soirée* with gradually decreasing patience. It was not so much the anxiety to behold Emma as the desire to get to sleep, by which he was animated, for what with the disturbances of the preceding evening and the subsequent journey, he was regularly knocked up, and had it not appeared to him the height of indecorum to do so, he would have retired to rest long before the arrival of his intended wife. Skinner, however, was quite

enough of a *beau* to understand the little attentions women constantly expect; and if he had before been unenlightened upon such points, his half year's service in the Fuggleston family would have sufficiently enlightened him: so he sat, and sat, and listened, and listened; every clicking clacking patten that clattered along the uneven pavement seemed to announce the coming company, and every sound of human voices appeared, to his attentive ear, the harbinger of their approach; but long indeed did he count the steps of passengers, the pattering of rain against the windows, the ticking of the hall clock, and the shrill chimes of the little time-piece on the mantel-shelf, before his hopes were realized, or his expectations fulfilled.

It should be observed, that, upon his first arrival, he had questioned the housemaid, at his uncle-in-law's, as to the situation of his bed-room and that of his servant, to which inquiry the girl, untutored, gave no direct answer, except as to the domestic, for whom she was certain there was no bed; upon which declaration, Skinner directed him to proceed to the most suitable, (*i. e.* the cheapest) inn, and come early in the morning for orders. The man-

servant of the Gray family was with them at the party, "helping" Mrs. Pimpernel's maids to wait, and all that; so that Skinner's servant followed the carriage, and established himself as well as he could, and no more was seen or thought of him.

At length two o'clock came, and shortly after a sound of merriment was heard before the windows, for, as I believe I have already explained, the house was in a city, and built after the London fashion, with windows to the street, with a knocker on its door, and a lamp in front, to make it look as civic as possible, in a place as dull and as dirty as Deal in peace-time, or Sandwich at any time. The sound increased, the laughter grew louder, and, in a moment, the lanthern-bearing lacquey sounded a peal upon the door.

The moment entrance was given to the party, Emma bounded in first, closely followed by Benson, in order to return him some book he had lent her, which was in the parlour: the old people prudently stopping to rub their shoes upon the mat. Emma, elated at another day's delay in the arrival of her dreaded yet destined husband, and full of all the spirits

with which the society she loved, a little dance on the carpet to the piano-playing of Fanny Wagstaffe, with Frederick for a partner, aided by the small punch of the Pimpernels, had inspired her, pushed past the maid through the hall into the parlour, in a half sort of bounding step, when, as she flung open the door with a violence which brought it slap-bang against the chair nearest it, she beheld, slowly rising from the blue leathern chair of her respectable uncle, quite tired, half sleeping, and close shorn, the destined sharer of her fortunes, Gervase Skinner, of Bagsden Parva, in the county of Somerset, Esq.

The appearance of a justice of the peace on Moulsey Hurst at the fighting hour; the unexpected return of the master into a school-room on the 5th of November, just after dusk; cold water upon fire; an extinguisher on a light, never produced a more sudden or striking effect. Emma, when she saw the vision, did not know it was Skinner, but she knew it could be nobody else, and Niobe herself was not more chilled or hardened on the instant, than the laughing girl of the minute before, as she saw the grave and solemn advance of her lover called

into action by the boisterous nature of her approach. It was a hundred chances to one that she had not turned round to Benson, and hid her blushing face in his arms; but she did not.

Benson stopped instinctively, and the old people were in a moment in action.

"Skinner, how are you?" exclaimed old Gray, who was proportionably elevated with the rest of the party. "Why, when did you arrive? Why didn't ye send for us, or come to us?—Why Kitty, how's this, Kitty?" continued the old gentleman, addressing the housemaid.

"The gentleman desired me not to send, Sir, and——"

"Ah, I see," cried Gray, "to make the surprise the greater. Here's Emma—dear, Emma, here's Mr. Skinner—why, Emma——"

"She has run up stairs," said her aunt, "just to compose herself; the sudden appearance of a stranger, and one of course so interesting to her, overcame her; but she will be down in a minute."

"And where is Benson, my dear?" said Gray——

"He is gone, I believe," said Mrs. Gray;

and so in truth he was, glad to escape the presence of a rival whose coming he was convinced could only breed dissension, and cause unpleasant disagreements in the family.

"I did not like to break up your pleasant party," said Skinner, "and I was too much fatigued to join in your gaieties; so I sat down to wait for your return, and I am rejoiced to see you looking so well."

"So am I to see you," said Gray; "but why, in the name of old Nick, have you cut off your hair in that strange way?—is that the fashion now?—have you been dressing after the last new magazine, eh?"

"Thereby hangs a tale," said Skinner.

"None that *I* see, by Jingo," said Gray.

"I'll tell you all to-morrow—but——"

"Oh, here's the child," said Miss Gray, senior; and in came Emma with a countenance flushed, and eyes, though bright as diamonds, sparkling through tears; she was greatly agitated, it must be confessed; the suddenness of the surprise acting upon feelings highly excited, and spirits in their full play, had nearly overcome her; but she never fainted for effect, and soon rallied sufficiently to receive the chaste

salute of Skinner upon her burning cheek. The very touch of his lip chilled every vein in her body, and having gone through the ceremony, she again quitted the room, and retired for the night, without being able to exchange a syllable with my hero.

"The surprise was too much for her," said Gray; "go to her, my dear sister, and see that she is kept quiet; and as for you, Skinner, now that's over, I suppose you have no great desire to sit up any longer, after your journey. Which Inn are you at?"

"Inn," said Skinner, "I—I—I am——

"I mean for sleeping," said the master of the house; "we can feed you well, and comfortably; but as for beds, we hav'n't one to spare—eh—sister, what's to be done?"

"Why, 'tis late," said the old lady; "but I dare say, at the Crown, if William goes—they will——"

"Now don't mind me at all," said Skinner; "I would just as soon lie down on this sofa, as on the finest bed in the world."

"Oh, that's impossible," said Gray.

"Not to me," replied the visitor, who had determined, at all events, to save one night's

lodging-money—" here I'll establish myself—I'm used to rough it, and I cannot endure the knocking people up, and giving all that trouble. Spare me a blanket, and here I'll sleep—'tis now near three, and at seven, my servant will be here. I shall be up, and interfere with nobody. —'Gad, 'tisn't the first nor the second time I have slept on a sofa—fellows at my time of life care nothing for such things."

"Well," said the old lady, seeing Gervase was quite resolved not to budge, "if you *don't* mind—perhaps to-morrow we can manage for you somewhere nearer than the Crown—for it's *my* fault; I ought to have told you that we had no sleeping accommodation."

"I contend that you have," said Skinner, gaily; "so disturb yourself not about me, and to-morrow, as you say, I may secure some lodging at hand, for the short time I shall remain."

"Short," said Miss Gray, senior.

"Come, sister," said the old gentleman, anxious, it should seem, to postpone business if he could, and get to bed for the present—"it is very late—very late indeed, and we must have no discussions. To-morrow, all our plans will be opened, and then we can make our arrangements;

so get Skinner some blankets, and a night-cap, and let him go to his *bivouac*, as I dare say he earnestly wishes to get to it."

And, accordingly, in less than half an hour, peace reigned uncontrolled in the dwelling: Emma Gray was revolving in her mind the events of the preceding evening, with the pimple looking face and cropped head of her intended, peeping and peering through the curtains whenever she looked up — the old people quietly in the arms of Morpheus—and Gervase settling himself to sleep on the sofa, in all the enjoyment of having saved half-a-crown, for a bed at the inn, besides a shilling for the chambermaid.

But this economical proceeding turned out equally unsuccessful with most of poor Skinner's operations of a similar nature. When he awoke in the morning, he discovered that he had contracted a most violent cold; a raging toothache assailed him, the only prospect of relief from which, that presented itself, being the swelling of his face; an event actively in progress by the time he rose, and which threatened to disable him for some time, if not from appearing in public, at least from playing the Lothario in the

gallant gay style in which he intended to perform it.

This calamity, though apparently trivial, indeed, otherwise so insignificant as to be hardly worth recording, is valuable as a link in the great chain, and as intimately connected with matters more unfortunate, and circumstances more interesting, than merely a swelled face or a stiff neck.

At breakfast, when he "shewed," Skinner's appearance (cropped and nicked as was his head, and swollen and red as was his countenance) was any thing but prepossessing; and if Emma's surprise, almost amounting to disgust, had thrown her off her guard the night before, the return to the horrible vision, settled down in the family as a reality, did her but little service. His attentions, it must be confessed, were divided between the object of his devotion and his own tooth-ache, for he suffered much, and was obliged to wrap up his cheek most unromantically in fleecy hosiery; so that as a *premier pas*, nothing ever turned out more unluckily for him, or perhaps more luckily for Emma; for she saw at a glance, not only the impossibility of her ever uniting herself with such a being; but, moreover, she

saw with greater satisfaction perhaps, that whatever motives he might have for the match, she herself was but a secondary object.

As the day wore on, Skinner grew worse; more pain, more swelling, more fever; and a lodging having been procured for him, thither he was removed at his own desire, the apothecary sent for, the mistress of the house specially enjoined to take care of him, and by seven o'clock that evening, Skinner the crop was laid up and laid down in what the faculty might differ upon, as to its being a high or a low fever. Benson, who concluded (and his feelings were in an eminent degree sensitive and delicate) that the arrival of Skinner was to be as completely the signal for his disappearance from Gray's house, as the flag of a superior admiral (however amicable the visit) is for superseding the previous commander, absolutely hid himself all the next morning in his painting room, unable to work, disliking to move, and wretched beyond imagination; but he was not destined so to remain long. Emma summoned him to dinner, and gave him her reasons for the invitation, which caught him just on the verge of the journey to London, which he had always intended to make as soon as Gervase should come to the ground.

She begged him to do no such thing as retreat: she distinctly repeated the course she meant to pursue. She said that at the moment Mr. Skinner was too unwell even to join them at dinner: but that was by no means her reason for begging him to come. She had made up her mind, and she thought it much fairer and more honourable to shew the full extent of her intentions at once to the man she would not marry, by displaying, in a manner so marked and unequivocal, her preference for the man she would marry, that if he did not at once withdraw, he might, at all events, under the sanction of old friendship for the family, and the peculiar circumstances of the absurd contract which existed, demand some sort of explanation of her conduct, and so hasten the declaration to which she had made up her mind.

Thus encouraged, Benson came as usual: and, like the army of Tom Thumb, he might have said,

> "Thus far with victory my arms are crown'd,
> For though I have not fought, yet have I found
> No foe to fight withal"—

for the pain and inflammation consequent upon

the "cheap lodging" of the preceding night, prevented the rival lover from presenting himself either on that or any other eight successive days: a delay which, unimportant as it may appear, in such a siege, was rendered vital by circumstances.

During this week, one event happened, highly illustrative of the ruling passion of Gervase, and which is of sufficient importance to record.

It will be remembered, that the gently insane gentleman at the asylum (and here let me pause to observe, that Skinner received an extremely handsome and valuable dressing-case, built by Edwards in his best possible manner, from Mr. Wilson, on the sixth or seventh day of his illness)—it will be remembered, I say, that this placid personage had utterly damnified and destroyed the bank-notes which were concealed under Skinner's silver shaving-box, the consequence of which was, that with the exception of some one or two five pound notes, which my hero kept in his purse, he had nothing of value with him, save a few sovereigns. This fund was nearly exhausted, and Skinner, sicker of confinement than of the illness his economy had produced, was calculating whether he should

be obliged to draw upon the provincial bank, when, in his pocket-book, he discovered the lottery-ticket which his friend, the stock-broker, had forced him to take in part amount of the bill he had discounted for him, drawn by Tubbs, of Bristol, and endorsed by Skinner. This was a relief to him, it was twenty-six pounds ten shillings ready money to be realized: for the lottery did not draw until after Easter, and here he was just in Passion-week, so that he could safely and prudentially nett his profit upon the government security, which "upon principle" he could not think of holding at so great a risk.

How to convert this into hard cash, was the question; and in order to prevent the hated necessity of drawing a cheque, he sent for the landlord of his lodgings up to his room, to ask him if he could get this ticket sold. The man hesitated, because he really did not know any person likely to risk so much, and he doubted whether the bank would take it as money, not knowing whether there was time to send it back to London, or any opportunity of disposing of it on the spot. However, of course he would ask, and see, and inquire; and accordingly he

proceeded to make the requisite investigation into the circumstances, and into the value of a property with the nature of which he was by no means intimately acquainted, under a strict injunction to secresy, as to whom he got it from.

It so happened, that the master of the lodging house, a retired cornchandler, or something connected with that branch of trade, was a *protegé* of the Grays; as might indeed be inferred from his having been selected as the landlord of the aspirant to Emma's hand; and being thus favoured by and known to them, was consequently well known by Benson; and as chance would have it, Benson was the first man he met in the street when going on his search for information.

Benson knew the nature of the "security," and explained to the man of corn, its actual or nominal value in the market; and as he went on expatiating upon its probable worth, and all the rest of its characteristics, Benson, who had collected a certain sum of money to defray the expences of his journey to London, and who having no banker, nor any need of one, happened to carry his debtor and creditor account in the right and left pockets of his pantaloons; and had,

at that moment, the whole of his ready cash stowed in those dexter and sinister receptacles, felt a sudden impulse, quite natural, and to be understood by such of my readers as have sanguine minds, and who having actually in their hands a sum sufficient to achieve a desirable object (rendered upon this special occasion more tempting, by a promise of a return of five pounds even if the ticket were drawn a blank), make a bold plunge to secure it; and turning over in the dark abyss of his pouch, the whole of his notes and gold, he declared his personal readiness to relieve his communicant of all farther embarrassment, by purchasing the ticket himself.

The cornchandler stared. The idea of a poor painter risking five-and-twenty guineas at a blow for a bit of paper, against the success of which, to any avail, the chances were as ten thousand to one, seemed like madness; but the knave in grain saw that if the transfer were completed, his trouble about the conversion of the security into money would be at an end, and also all difficulty about defraying the numerous little charges for which *he*, poor man, felt assured that Skinner would delight in disbursing, so

that instead of checking the disposition to extravagance, which in his heart of hearts, he reprobated, he seemed rather to encourage it; and stepping into Benson's study, the transfer was speedily completed, and Skinner, elated at the idea of having "done the bumpkins" out of about fifteen shillings premium, which he charged upon the ticket, gave directions for paying off the apothecary, nurse, and other people; and on the tenth day of his sojourn in our cloistered city, felt himself well enough to pay a short visit to Gray's.

The next day he was much better—so much better, that he resolved to do the civil thing; and after dining with his betrothed, proceed with the family to Mrs. Pimpernel's, who for the second time volunteered a *soirée* in honour of the new arrival, and in celebration of his restoration to health.

It may here be necessary to observe, in this kingdom of morality—and certain it is, no state in the world is so truly moral as England—that there are distinctions made under circumstances of locality, for which no possible reason can be given. In Passion-week, every theatre, every place of amusement in London, is most properly

closed, and the idea of a play in the metropolis during that solemn season, would be treated, as it ought to be, with every mark of popular indignation, even if the constituted authorities did not interpose their power to interdict such a flagrant breach of propriety. But the extraordinary and anomalous part of this matter, is, that in the country, in provincial towns and cities, this most proper rule is entirely disregarded, and Passion-week is frequently selected for theatrical performances, because, by the closing of the London playhouses, the attractive actors and actresses are at liberty to give the rustics a touch of their calling; and accordingly we find during that sacred time, the stars of town, driven from their spheres, wandering like comets in an eccentric course, attracting all eyes, and obtaining all admiration.

It seems that Mrs. Pimpernel, who piqued herself upon knowing all men's tastes, and making parties better than any body, had discovered, that during the week immediately following that in which Skinner recovered, several London performers of eminence were to shine at the theatre; and having ascertained from the Grays, Skinner's peculiarly strong

theatrical taste, she, like a kind creature, as she was, had invited some two or three of the principal persons to a party, to which, she being a very dashing personage in her way, and a grand *bespeaker* of plays, they were always delighted to go, not merely for the sake of the damaged hot water, which she called tea, or the dirt between bread and butter, which was handed about as sandwiches; but because she could push off tickets upon the subalterns, who were quartered in the place, or persuade proper sort of people to take boxes: so that (which of course Skinner did not know, nor indeed would it have signified if he had known) she was in this sequestered city, very like what Skinner himself was at Bagsden. Accordingly a great secret was made of the treat prepared for him, and he was, after a moderate repast at Gray's, carried in a sedan chair to Mr. Pimpernel's, where the whole of the party arrived prematurely—that is to say, before the stars had appeared. This a little spoiled the effect for Mrs. Pimpernel, who was anxious to have shewn off her whole blaze before the coming of Skinner, for in truth she had not herself seen the principal attractions of the

evening, who were to come under the wing of the manager and his wife, people of first rate respectability in the dramatic profession.

The description of a genteel party in a country town, will not be entertaining to those who never assisted at one; to those who have, it will be hardly interesting to depict the cold stone-paved hall, upon the chairs in which cloaks of all colours lie distributed; the old, wide, and shallow stairs, creaking when stepped upon, which lead to the long low rooms opening one into the other, or the huge beams crossing the ceilings, and the vast fire-places abutting into the apartments.

Two quadrille tables, with real pools dug out of their corners, stood in what might be called the ante-room, on the left of which, a closet was fitted up with a nice cleanly covered table, attended by a tea-making housemaid, and her little sister, "in to help:" before, lay the presence chamber, on the walls of which, hung three or four different sized portraits of the Wagstaffs and Pimpernels: two square worked screens on mahogany claw feet; one hard, yellow, dingy, damask sofa; a horizontal piano-forte of the year 1791, on which stood two candles lighted;

a smaller table towards the corner, on which lay Miss Wagstaff's album, surrounded by Misses; near the door, one or two attornies' clerks, and juvenile apothecaries, and the lanky long-legs of the more respectable families; on chairs round the other half of the apartment, were seated sundry large elderly ladies, habited like judges, in wigs and gowns, eying each other's dresses, and valuing lace and silk by appraisement; behind these, stood in little groups, the attornies and apothecaries themselves, whispering the dowagers, and waiting the arrival of the stars: in corners two or three gentle flirtations were in progress, watched only by the chaperons, if the lover happened to be poor. The physician, a clergyman, and the two or three county people present, were grouped round Mr. Pimpernel before the fire-place, to which party, Skinner and old Gray were shortly added.

No sooner, however, did Skinner appear, than all eyes were rolling, all heads nodding; a sort of electrical communication affected all the "benches;" and poor Gervase, with his cold, inflammation, and crop, became the object of universal attraction.

"I believe," said Mr. Pimpernel, to begin conversation,—"I believe, Mr. Skinner, you are very theatrical."

"I am fond of the stage, Sir," said Gervase.

"So Mrs. P. told me," replied he; "you are aware that we are to have some theatricals here next week, and ——"

"Mr. P." said his lady, "what did I tell you after dinner? You always spoil surprises."

"Oh! I beg pardon, my dear," said Mr. P.; "Mrs. Pimpernel has some surprise for you—what, I don't pretend to know; however, it seems that I must hold my tongue."

Skinner set his friends down for a couple of silly fools, and assumed a seat next Emma Gray, from whose gentle manner, and kind reception, he augured a favourable result, and resolved to shew the country gabies, the last new and approved method of courting, as established in London; and accordingly he began a conversation, for which he was extremely well qualified, but of which, love, or any thing connected with it, formed no component part, but which he contrived to maintain, illustrated with some not unamusing anecdotes, so as to convey to the minds of the uninitiated bump-

kins, that he was carrying all before him; indeed Benson, who watched these proceedings with more than ordinary interest, was very much of opinion, that Emma thought Skinner's society more agreeable than she had anticipated, or, at all events, was more amiable in her manner, than she had any occasion to be, under all the circumstances.

In the middle of this most agreeable *tête-à-tête* in which Skinner, free at the moment from any bodily pain, felt himself gliding along with the flowing tide, a noise, and rustling, and bustling about, in the ante-room, and a sort of cold air, the inevitable consequence of a new arrival in a small house, announced that somebody rather *distingué* had added himself to the assembly. Skinner was by far too gallant to move; but Emma, aware of the nature of the importation, felt extremely anxious to witness Skinner's surprise at finding himself in company with some of the best London actors; he not having the smallest idea that any such persons were likely to be present—in short, it was one of Mrs. Pimpernel's agreeable surprises, and the effect all depended upon the suddenness of the *denouement.*

Skinner still remained unconscious of what was going on, until the crowd pressed onwards towards his back; when Mrs. P., actively doing the honours, after the fashion of the olden time, by introducing every body, brought up a Mr. and Mrs. Whetstone, to Skinner, and presented them as the manager of the theatre and his wife, who had been good enough to prevail upon some of their friends to accompany them; and next in order, she submitted to his view another brace of public characters, in these words——

"Mr. and Mrs. Fuggleston, from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, whom I dare say I need not introduce to *you*, Mr. Skinner."

Never did sound so terrible, or sight so fearful, strike upon the palsied senses of a man, as these upon the eyes and ears of Skinner. Amelrosa started back in amazement and agony, and Fuggleston abruptly averting his head, drew his frail rib close to his others, and pushed past my hero, whose agitated countenance produced the most singular effect upon Emma, who was watching his unmeaning features, to discover, if possible, whether the agreeable surprise of the vivacious Mrs. Pimpernel, would animate

them into the expression of any feeling whatever.

Her astonishment, therefore, was unbounded, when she saw the appearance of mingled apprehension, horror, and dismay, playing upon the face of her lover; nor could he recover himself from the confusion into which the dreadful vision had thrown him. A thousand doubts and suspicions filled his mind. Mrs. Pimpernel had perhaps heard of the affair in London, and had gotten up this scene, to destroy at one blow the proposed connection between him and Emma; but then, surely, had she been aware of Amelrosa's intrigue, she would not have introduced her to her friends and acquaintances; but what if possible cut him deepest, was the appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Fuggleston together, after the representation she had made of her husband's inexorable resentment, and her consequent abandonment; knowing as he did, that besides paying heavy damages in the shape of recompence to a husband, who, as it now appeared pretty evident, had received no injury, he had settled upon the partner of his crime, an annuity of which he well knew the first quarterly payment would be due at Midsum-

mer—what was he to do? what was he to think?

After a moment's consideration, he felt assured that the arrival of the Fugglestons in those parts was purely accidental and professional; that the fact of Fuggleston accompanying his wife—however duped Skinner might have been with regard to the supposed rage of the irritated husband, and however certain he might feel that he had been needlessly frightened by his little friend Screwman—was satisfactory in every sense of the word, since not only would it prevent any amatory or expostulatory appeals from the fair Amelrosa, but necessarily preclude the possibility of any unpleasant reference to the *faux pas;* the very mention of which, would entail disgrace upon the actor, and expulsion upon his wife.

All this flitted through the squire's mind in half the time required to write it down; yet it was long enough acting upon him to convince Emma, that something more than the accidental introduction of the London stars was agitating him, and she endeavoured to ascertain, whether she was right in her suspicions, that they were old acquaintances.

"You have seen that lady in London," said the innocent girl.

"I have," said Skinner.

"Is she a good performer: is tragedy or comedy her forte?" inquired Emma.

"She is an universal genius," said Skinner; "one of the most popular actresses of the day."

"You knew her in private before this evening?" said Emma.

"I have met her," said Skinner; "indeed she was down at Taunton, last year acting, before she went to London, and there——"

"Ah!" said Miss Gray, "I thought you were acquainted; but I am afraid you are tired of her friendship, for I did not think your meeting and greeting were very cordial."

"Why, to tell you the truth," said Gervase, "I don't much like her husband—he is a pert, presuming person, and one is obliged to keep such people at a distance. I certainly had no idea of finding them here."

Skinner's situation became extremely irksome. To enter into details, which he apprehended might somehow betray him into involuntary explanations, was the height of misery; still he could

not leave either his place next Miss Gray or the party altogether at the moment, although his object was, as soon as possible, to plead his recent indisposition, and beat a retreat at the earliest opportunity.

While all these things were passing in my hero's mind, Amelrosa was suffering a thousand bitter pangs: upon *her*, the sight of Skinner, connected as he was with some of the most important and perilous points of her life, made an effect wholly different from that which her appearance had produced upon him. Her amazement at finding him domesticated in a place, the name of which he had never mentioned to *her*, was followed by the desire to know what his object there could be; this she shortly ascertained, through the agreeable Mrs. Pimpernel, who finding the Fugglestons knew Skinner by reputation, and as a patron of the theatre, (which was all they confessed to,) thought she could make herself extremely pleasant to Amelrosa, by explaining that Mr. Skinner had for many years been engaged to be married to the young lady—then sitting next him—"sweet girl," "such a mind," "such a heart," "quite a treasure."

Then first burst upon the heart of the finished woman of the world the pang of remorse which the consciousness of having been deceived, inflicts even upon the most callous of coquets. During all the period of his attention to her, during the progress of that affection, as he called it, and of that devotion, as he proved it, and which ended so triumphantly for him, never had he mentioned this engagement: on the contrary, he had sworn to the singleness of his love, and his utter disregard for every other woman upon earth; nay, he had even gone so far as to insinuate, that if Amelrosa were freed from her matrimonial chain, it would be his greatest pride and happiness to make her Mrs. Skinner.

The hearing of his falsehood, although he was now nothing to her; the sight of the sweet, artless girl in playful conversation with *him* for whom she never cared, farther than her interest guided her, were, strange to say, too much for her, and "all mind," "all sensibility," as she was, her eyes swam, her head grew giddy, and the lioness of the evening went off in a fit of some sort, which caused a vast sensation, and she was borne into the ante-room, where her deadly

paleness, (especially after they had sprinkled her face to bring her to,) filled every body with the deepest alarm. Luckily, as is always the case in country-town society, professional aid was at hand; the assistance proffered was accepted, and the gentle Amelrosa was removed from the assembly, attended by her husband, amidst the regrets of all the rustics, who had hoped, and indeed expected, that the *prima donna* would have "done something," in return for the nastiness and negus, of which she had been invited to partake.

It was a great relief to Skinner to find—although he lamented the fainting as likely to increase the *eclat* of the evening, and perhaps lead to discussions and surmises, as to the cause of her indisposition—that Mrs. F. was gone; he looked round him with more confidence, and breathed with greater freedom; but unsophisticated as Emma Gray was, and good natured as Mrs. Pimpernel might be, still they were both individually convinced that Skinner and Mrs. Fuggleston knew more of each other than either of them cared to admit.

Such a suspicion once excited, in such a field

as a country town, or rather provincial city; it must be clear to my reader, that the matter would not rest where it was; and the surmises of the two ladies, who in the first instance had had better opportunities for closer observation upon the conduct of the parties, than any others in the party, were not long in communicating with two or three select bosom friends, so that before noon the next day, the rencontre and fainting fit were the subject of universal conversation amongst the "best circles."

The party, upon which a great damp had been thrown by this event, broke up rather earlier than usual, although Mr. Whetstone did all he could to make amends for the disappointment occasioned by the star's indisposition; but the people knew Mr. Whetstone; they heard him, it is true, but then they could hear him whenever they chose; no man is a prophet in his own country, and so they applauded rather for "auld lang syne," than for any present pleasure they received from his exertions; and it was very little past midnight, when the "house was up," and the company separated for their respective homes; Skinner's reflections, it must be confessed, being any thing but agreeable, as he traversed the

streets towards his lodgings; where having ascended to his sleeping-room, he endeavoured to arrange, before he settled himself for the night, some plan for the conduct best to be adopted on the morrow.

CHAPTER IX.

How old may Phillis be (you ask),
  Whose beauty thus all hearts engages:
To answer is no easy task,
  For she has certainly two ages.

Stiff in brocade and pinch'd in stays,
  Her patches, paint, and jewels on,
All day let Envy view her face,
  And Phillis is but twenty-one.

Paint, patches, jewels laid aside
  At night, astronomers agree,
The evening has the day belied,
  And Phillis is some forty-three.

PRIOR.

WHEN Skinner, having been admitted into his lodgings by the maid-servant, his own man having taken his departure for his sleeping place at the inn, found himself in the solitude of his chamber, he began to reflect seriously upon the extremely unpleasant situation in which he

was placed. He foresaw that an eclaircissement was inevitable; for, although he calculated, and rightly, too, that Fuggleston himself would be most anxious to conceal the real facts, still he knew enough of the temper and disposition of his wife to be quite sure that, if they came in contact, which could hardly be avoided, a "scene" would be the consequence. Besides, from what Emma had already asked, and Mrs. Pimpernel hinted, added to the faint-away incident, he was certain that from joking they would soon get to earnest, and push their inquiries to a point, destructive, as he apprehended, to the matrimonial scheme so dear to his heart.

But even admitting that it were possible for him entirely to avoid the Fugglestons, natural curiosity, and a desire to know how the reconciliation between them had been wrought, induced him rather to wish for one half hour's interview with the lady, not altogether without the hope of being able to induce her to relinquish the annuity, which, however firmly secured to her, was certainly granted, upon her own shewing, under the supposition of an eternal separation between her and her spouse; at all events, he thought that a few minutes conversa-

tion might soothe the anger which he anticipated she would feel upon the discovery that he had concealed his proposed marriage with Emma from her, during the progress of their unlucky affair; for he was conscious that she might securely cut him to pieces by her observations, while he, upon every consideration, would be forced to bear patiently and silently all her satire and severity.

His dread of the breakfast hour was considerable: there, he knew he should be questioned and cross-questioned, and examined and cross-examined touching his London acquaintance; and not knowing exactly whether Mrs. Pimpernel had made her inquiries of Mrs. Fuggleston, or what degree of intimacy or acquaintanceship Mrs. F. had admitted to have existed between them, he trembled lest he should commit himself, or contradict her, in such a manner as must lead to further research.

At length Gervase sank to sleep, disturbed with dreams, it must be confessed, of the most confused and disagreeable nature; and when he awoke, he was unrefreshed and uncomfortable, feverish and nervous, anxious and unsettled; but above all, apprehensive of meeting with

Amelrosa or her husband on a sudden; still, however, as I have just said, wishing to ascertain all the particulars of their reconciliation, and desirous of getting an opportunity of hearing the story from the lips of the lady herself.

His servant had carried out his clothes, and placed some hot water for him on his table, before he had awakened, which was pretty good evidence that towards morning he had slumbered pretty soundly; and accordingly, Skinner, perceiving it to be considerably past nine o'clock, commenced the irksome operation of shaving, (which since the demolition of his hair, became doubly unpleasant, as forcing him to view the work of destruction) and was seated before his looking-glass, when the sound of a piano-forte in the room immediately under him, attracted his attention. He did not know the drawing rooms were occupied—some new arrival—an accession of lodgers—and so he went on lathering, and brushing, and stropping, till after a momentary prelude, his ears were assailed with the well known air—

"The village spire in yonder grove."

—No two persons could tune those strains so ex-

quisitely, and in a moment Skinner recognized the sweet voice of Amelrosa practising her popular song.

The case was plain—the cornchandler's family lodgings had been secured for the London stars, and by the kind management of Mrs. Pimpernel, Fuggleston and Amelrosa were bestowed away in the same house with the man who had caused all their misery, and whose presence was poison to the injured Thespians; not to speak of the agreeable situation of my hero himself, who thus cut off from retreat, was blockaded by the very people, of all others upon earth, with whom he had no desire to be brought into contact.

Skinner himself could not but attribute this misadventure to his parsimony—if he had not endeavoured to secure a bed at his future uncle's, he would perhaps have been already married—the ceremony, as he believed, being only delayed on account of his indisposition; if he had subsequently gone to the hotel, where gentlemanly accommodations would have been provided for him, he would not have been subjected to this association with his bitter foe; and if, when he had determined upon cheap living

at the cornchandler's, he had secured the first floor instead of the second, which he took "upon principle," as being at once more quiet and more airy, he would at all events have had the opportunity of free ingress and egress without passing through the portion of the house occupied by the new comers, subject to their observations, and it might be, entangled with them on the stairs.

Shortly after Skinner had made the agreeable discovery that he was was actually domesticated with the Fugglestons, his trusty servant arrived, who confirmed his almost certain suspicions as to the voice and performance.

"Eh, Zur," said the man, "Master and Missis Fuggleston be lodged i' first floor. I han't zeen neither on 'em myself; but the maid-zervant told me all about it, so I zaid we knowed them quite well, and tould em all about they being down at Bagsden, and how they comed up in carriage, and all, and zo up at Squire Gray's they zeemed quoite surprised loik."

"So," said Skinner, "you have taken the trouble to tell all that history at Mr. Gray's too."

"Ees, zure, Zur," said Joseph, "they don't

zeem to know you knew um, zo Miss had heard they were a lodging here, and she zent for me to know if I thought it would be onywise onpleasant to you; upon which I zaid quite the contrary, I was zure, for that nobody was more intimate loike one wi' other than you and the Fuggs, as we used to call um."

"Upon *my* word," said Skinner, "this completes the thing; this is beyond belief agreeable, that you should go out of your way to relate all this rigmarole to Miss Gray."

"I didn't go a bit out of my way, Zur," said Joseph; "it's in a right loine from this to the Crown where I zleep."

"Stuff," said his disgusted master; "and what did Miss Gray say to all your history?"

"Oh, nought much, Zur," said the man, "only she zaid, she thought you was acquainted loike, although nobody else in the vamily did, and zo I zaid ees, you were, and were always wi' um, and that loike."

"Go your ways, Sir," said Skinner, "get back to the inn, and on no account come here to-day—to-morrow I shall in all probability remove to the hotel, or somewhere else; but mind, I desire you will say nothing more to

anybody than you have already said upon this subject, and on no account come here till I give you further orders."

Joseph withdrew, evidently disappointed at the reception his intelligence met with, and greatly surprised that his display of historical knowledge made to Emma was not approved by his master, so entirely and cordially as he had anticipated. To Skinner the blow was vital; for he, with the tact of a systematic intriguer, had made it a principal point of policy to remove from about himself and Amelrosa, every person likely to make any observation or remark upon the affair going on between them, and for this reason, had sent back this honest domestic to Bagsden, in order that he might not be embarrassed by his presence, or shackled by his *surveillance*; so that Joseph was perfectly ignorant of the rupture between the parties, and concluded that the treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, of which he had witnessed the ratification at Bagsden, was still in full force.

The blunder was unfortunate; but it was comparatively lucky that Skinner was apprized of the extent of Emma's knowledge; for otherwise he would most certainly have maintained

a very different line of defence, from that which it was now his intention to adopt, and with which indeed the observations upon the Fugglestons, which he made to Miss Gray on the preceding evening, would by no means unnaturally agree.

Never did man more softly or cautiously steal down staircase, than Gervase Skinner, as he descended upon this special occasion; he peeped and peered over the bannisters, to be quite assured that the door of the Fugglestons' apartment was closed, and when he really found himself out of the house, the delight he felt at having escaped a rencontre within, expelled from his mind in some degree the dread he had before endured of his anticipated examination on the delicate point at breakfast at Gray's.

Onwards he went, and soon found himself seated at the cheerful, neat, and well covered table, of which the honours were "*a* doing" by Emma, supported on the one hand by her uncle, and on the other by Benson, where he had been actually installed at the desire of his beloved, who, to all the love she bore him, had now superadded a little female spirit, which prompted her to resent the previous evening's

dissimulation of Gervase upon the subject of his former acquaintance with the player and his wife; a dissimulation which, she coupled and compared with the glowing picture that the servant Joseph had, out of pure affection for his master, and in the innocence of the delight of having discovered some of his dear friends so near him, painted of the intimacy which subsisted between the parties, their frequent visits, the playhouse quarrel. the loan of the carriage, and ten thousand other little incidents highly illustrative of the good understanding which had been mutually maintained not only at Bagsden but in London.

Skinner thus was placed between the horns of a dilemma, in the most uncomfortable possible manner; and worse betided him than he yet could comprehend; for while Emma, his source of future profit and happiness, was properly angry with his hypocrisy towards her, who claimed all his candour and sincerity; Amelrosa was burning for vengeance on his systematic deception and long preserved silence with respect to his intended marriage; thus was he brought between two fires, from which his raking disposition appeared likely to meet suitable reward.

"So, Skinner," said old Gray, "you are latish, my friend—London hours I suppose—here we are punctual as clock-work—nine to a minute, up comes the urn, in comes the toast and butter, and there sits Emmy."

"Good morning, Mr. Skinner," said the young lady—Skinner standing as if waiting until Mr. Benson should resign what certainly appeared to him, under all the circumstances, *his* place.

"I declare I—overslept myself, I suppose," said Gervase; "however, if you will have such gay parties"——

"And such gay people at them," said Emma, "we really may expect to turn the heads of those poor innocent creatures who are unused to such brilliant society."

To this Gervase turned a deaf ear, and seating himself by Miss Gray, senior, made his inquiries after her health, in the most complacent and insinuating manner.

"Why, Skinner," said old Gray, "our fainting beauty of last night I find is an inmate of your house—mighty convenient for so accomplished an amateur, to fall into such snug quarters—why you'll have wit, mirth, and music from morning till midnight."

"I intend removing to the hotel, to-day, Sir," said Skinner; "the place will get too noisy I fear"——

"What desert your old friends, Mr. Skinner?" said Emma: "you must not try to keep up the joke with me of not knowing that gay and lovely person any longer; you should first bind your servants to secrecy, for the honest delight of your unsophisticated man, betrayed not in consequence of any inquiries of mine, I assure you, the whole history of your particular acquaintance with those people, upon whom, last night, you bestowed no sort of acknowledgment, and thereby caused, as I believe, the sad catastrophe which spoiled all the amusement of the evening."

"It seems, Miss Gray," said Skinner, "that you are determined to compensate for the loss of your evening's amusement, by making me the subject of your morning's diversion. I certainly *was* very intimate with the persons to whom you refer, but the closest friendships may be broken by mere trifles — something not worth mentioning occurred, which induced me to adopt the line of conduct I last night took, and there's an end of it; only, in addi-

tion, I would say, that the same feeling by which I was then actuated leads me to shift my lodgings to a place where I may not be likely to come in contact with them; for," continued he, addressing the elder Miss, "I don't know any thing more awkward than being accidentally thrown with people, with whom one has once been intimate, but from whom we are estranged by some unpleasant disagreement."

"She is a good actress, Mr. Skinner," said Benson.

"In some parts she performs with great success," said Skinner.

"In Matrimony, I am told, she is capital," added the painter.

"She is extremely vivacious," said Skinner.

"But do *you* know, Mr. Skinner," said Emma, "I have had a note from Mrs. Pimpernel this morning, in which she seems to infer that you were not always in the habit of speaking so coldly and indifferently about her."

"I dare say, Miss Gray," said Skinner, "that your friend Mrs. Pimpernel is a very clever lady, and a great favourite of yours: but if she

derives her opinion of me or of my conduct from such a source as Mr. or Mrs. Fuggleston, I must beg leave not to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the court."

"Come, come, Emmy," said old Gray, "don't be too hard upon Gervase; wait till you have him altogether, and then you know you can do as you please with him."

If Skinner could have seen the expression of Emma's animated countenance, which was hidden by the tea urn from his view, and have witnessed the look she gave Frederick when this indefinite period of perfect happiness was mentioned, he might have satisfied himself, that his chance of her hand was but small. Benson watched the progress of the affair with more interest even than Emma, for he had caught some broken observations the night before, which passed between Mr. Whetstone, the manager, and Amelrosa's husband; and the remark made by that person, upon pointing out Skinner to the manager, more clearly enlightened the lover than anything else which had yet transpired; so that *he*, being prepared for a grand *eclaircissement* before long, was desirous to gain all the little points of information necessary

to complete the defeat of his rival, which the establishment of any misconduct pending his negociation of marriage with the young lady, he thought could not but tend greatly to accelerate. Thus Skinner sat, as it were, exposed on all sides, without one sheltering hand to protect him; for although Gray, who was the only one of the family apparently cordial with him, did conduct himself good-naturedly and hospitably towards him, he admitted that he never saw such a man in his life, and even indulged in private jokes to Emma, upon the probability and improbability of their marriage.

Emma's determination to be respectfully civil to the friend of her father, was considerably shaken by the discovery of the morning; and her aunt admitted, that if he did know much of the people, something very strange must have happened to make him so cool and then so warm; but they all agreed, that he must give some satisfactory explanation of his conduct before the affair proceeded much further.

The most uncomfortable breakfast ever eaten having been concluded, several schemes for the day's diversion were proposed; a visit to the cathedral; to Benson's painting-room; to the

new library ; to several other enlivening places was suggested and acceded to ; and accordingly the party resolving to walk before luncheon, and drive somewhere after it, agreed to commence their first progress forthwith.

Skinner, anxious to get away from his lodgings quietly, and knowing enough of the professional pursuits of his friends, to know that rehearsal would require their attendance about the present period of the day, resolved upon just stepping in, arranging with his landlord, explaining his reasons, after his own fashion, for quitting his house, and giving directions for the removal of his personals to the hotel, where every body agreed he could be so particularly well accommodated ; he therefore set off to the cornchandler's, and begged the party to call for him on their way, which was agreed to ; and Emma, Benson, old Gray, and his sister, having prepared themselves for the expedition, sauntered slowly up the street to pick up their agreeable friend.

Skinner having reached the house, opened the door as usual with the latch, which gave ready admission during the day, and entered the passage—all was still, no sound assailed his ears, and he was ascending the stairs, when a voice of dis-

tress was heard close below him; and in an instant, he felt himself grasped by a convulsive hand—he turned and found it was Amelrosa herself, who had seen him enter the house, and had rushed in, after him for five minutes' conversation, to explain matters, and convince him that her coming thither was mere accident.

"What must you think of me?" said Amelrosa. "What notion would you form of my delicacy, if you were not assured that chance brought us here?"

"I believe you," said Skinner; "but your appearance did not half so much surprise me as that of your husband.—When were you reconciled?"

"The day after you left me," said Amelrosa. "I wrote to him to beg to see him—he is convinced in his own mind that that is false, which we, alas! know to be true. Our interests demanded some little sacrifice; and although his anger towards you is not the least softened by the conviction in his mind, that however appearances are against me, I am innocent, he has behaved most generously, and we have never had one cross word until last night, when he accused me of knowing that you were to be here."

"Assure him," said Skinner, "of the fallacy of this, and, here, let me entreat you, induce him for our sakes, to keep this history, which, after all, does him no great credit, to himself. Step in here," said Skinner, pointing to the door of the parlour which was untenanted; "let me entreat of you do me this kindness, as very much depends upon the way in which our former acquaintance is spoken of."

"My influence shall ever be exerted one way," said Amelrosa: "a woman who has once loved as I have, even if her feelings are outraged by cruelty, can never divest herself of the affection she has felt."

"You see," said Skinner, "I am on the eve of marriage here to that young lady with whom I was sitting last night; and these people are so particular, and stiff, and starched, and strait-laced, that if they could make up a story, which it certainly is neither to your interest, nor that of Fuggleston's, to countenance, I shall be most assuredly defeated."

"Defeated!" exclaimed Amelrosa; "and do you mean really to say that you *are* going to be married? They told me so last night, but I did

not believe it—so soon forgotten—so soon driven from your recollection !"

Skinner, who had not anticipated this turn to the conversation, and who had only sought to sooth the husband, and not excite the dormant affection of the wife, thought he would at once end all her solicitude upon this point, by assuring her in the most solemn manner, that he had been long engaged and devoted to Miss Gray, and was only now here in fulfilment of a promise of many years standing.

This fired the train — Amelrosa's cheeks glowed, her eyes sparkled——

"What then, did you deceive me throughout? Was I only destined to hold a secondary place in your heart when you made me the victim I am?—Oh!" exclaimed the agitated wife, and uttering a piercing shriek, fell senseless into Skinner's arms; at which precise moment, the party coming up to proceed upon their agreeable walk, old Gray pushed open the street door, according to local custom, and exhibited to the astonished eyes of Mr. Benson, and Miss Gray, the interesting spectacle of Amelrosa in another fit, supported by the suitor for the hand of the young and artless Emma.

The servants of the house hearing the noise, rushed to the scene of action, and the whole party was in an instant grouped like the characters at the end of a German play.

It must be evident to my readers that this scene, however highly charged with dramatic effect, could not last long. Old Gray's surprise, Emma's alarm, and Benson's indignation, all conspired to expel them even before the terrified squire and the unconscious fair one were aware of the *denouement* which threatened the most serious consequences to Skinner, the demolition of Mrs. Fuggleston's present respectability, and the eventual annihilation of the lover's hopes as far as regarded his intended wife.

It happened that Emma's aunt was so far behind in the walk, that the sight of the fainting fair and the attentive swain was lost to her; and when she came up with the rest of the party, and found only broken answers and deep inuendos returned to her inquiries after Gervase Skinner, the old gentlewoman was thrown into a state of perfect amazement.

"Why, my dear sister," said old Gray, "I

think the less we say about it the better—Gervase appears so wonderfully susceptible, that he has struck up a most intimate acquaintance with that London actress who fainted at Mrs. Pimpernel's last night."

"You *don't* say so," said old Miss Gray; "but how did you find it out?"

"Ocular demonstration, Ma'am," said Benson; "we cannot explain particulars, but we saw enough."

"Quite enough, aunt," said Emma, "not to make me determine never to receive Mr. Gervase Skinner as a suitor; but quite enough to justify the determination to that effect, which I made some months ago."

"Why, I must say, Emmy," said her uncle, "it must be very aggravating to your feelings to——"

"On the contrary, my dear uncle, most gratifying," replied Emma, "because now I have no compunction in rejecting him, since it appears that he is not doomed to wear the willow long under any circumstances."

"But the other woman has got a husband, Mr. G.," said the elder Miss Gray.

"So I know she has," replied her brother, "and the other woman's husband has got a wife; but upon my word I think it our duty to make the whole affair public, I——"

"By no means, my dear uncle," said Emma: "the private affairs of these people are nothing to us: why should we meddle, or render ourselves hateful to a whole race of persons in whom we can have no possible interest?—Mr. Skinner must know enough of the world to know that I am fully justified in resenting so gross an affront as that which he has been pleased to put upon me; and so much, if he have not the good sense to know it, must be told him; but further than that, I vote for perfect silence on the subject."

"But, my dear," said her aunt, "Mrs. Pimpernel will have these folks to her house—the Wagstaffs are going to ask them to dinner."

"Well, and what is all that to us?" said Emma. "Mr. Skinner may have offended or outraged this lady by some rude or inconsiderate advances made to her, which may account for the strong excitement which she

laboured under just now; but let us not be instrumental in injuring her reputation, of whom we know nothing; particularly when doing so would have the appearance of anger and jealousy. Little as I know of the world, from what I have seen here and heard elsewhere, females on the stage are too constantly exposed to the impertinences and freedoms of men, who think they may presume upon their station and profession, to go, like other women, evenly and quietly along the path of life; and I should never have a happy moment if I thought that I was, directly or indirectly, the cause of any sorrow or pain to this Mrs. Fuggleston, or of any dispute or disagreement between her and her husband, by a public discussion of Mr. Skinner's misconduct, when the chances are an hundred to one, that the fault is all his, and *her* only crime that, of having strong feelings, and a proper sense of an indignity offered to her in the absence of her natural protector; it is therefore my suit, that this affair is never breathed. I am content to lose my husband and my fortune in the struggle; but I repeat an intreaty that I may not even indirectly be made the cause of unhappiness or uneasiness to others."

"Bravely said, Emmy," cried her uncle; "and if your aunt had heard nothing about it, not a syllable should have transpired; but now she is aware of it, all hope of secresy is vain; she might as well try to carry water in a colander as keep a secret in her own old noddle; as the sound of Orpheus' lute moved the stones, so the smell of Mrs. Pimpernel's hyson unbinds my old sister's tongue; and the very first time—mark my words—that this Mrs.—— I don't know what you call her, is mentioned at tea-time, or thereaway—out will come the whole history, with as many additions as time and circumstances will permit."

"For shame, you censorious old man," said Miss Gray, "I never told a——"

"Well, well, I won't debate the question here," said Gray; "but I so cordially agree in all Emma says, that I *do* hope for this once we may be unanimous in concealing what it can be creditable to nobody to divulge."

"I confess," said Benson, "I think that some notice should be taken of the affair to Mr. Skinner himself—I feel that Miss Gray's respectability requires that. I have no ob-

jection, if I am permitted, to be the bearer of a communication, which without making a scene, or creating a sensation, would, as I should manage it, put a final termination to his hopes of a hand, which, supposing him even to have been a suitable person, or the object of her choice, his own highly indelicate conduct must have forfeited."

"Well said, painter," cried Gray; "I see it, Sir, in a twinkling—you want to knock him off the easel, and pop yourself up—and a much more suitable affair it would be—but the money, Benson—the money—that will all go to the little green devils, if we break off the match."

"Better that than be tormented with the blue devils for life," said Benson; "but I don't exactly see——"

"Why, the consequence of the failure of this match," said Gray, "upon which my poor brother set his heart, will be, that if Emma does not marry Skinner, her fifteen thousand pounds goes to what is called the Green-coat Hospital, in this city, at which, between you and me and the post, my said brother received

his early learning; and you'll admit no education could be more liberal, for he got it for nothing."

"And so, Frederick," said Emma, "you see the sacrifice on my part is all for the benefit of the rising generation—ought I to hesitate a moment?"

"I think not, assuredly," replied the lover.

"Why, for my part," said Gray, "now things are come to what may be called a crisis, I honestly admit I should not like to see my ugly Emma there, with her little cocked up nose, snapped up by that crop-eared Philander—but what's to be done?"

Here Emma and Benson exchanged a look, expressive to each other, that *this* was the moment to break the ice, and confess the existence of a mutual pledge of faith between them; and accordingly, ill-suited as was the scene of action—a meadow—or, as it is called, a "mead," adjoining the town; and ill-timed as perhaps some may think such a communication during a "walk," still their feelings sympathized upon the point, and it struck them simultaneously, that the moment had arrived, and that

"now or never" was the time for the disclosure.

It was accordingly made, and although poor Emma saw nothing of all the objects before her, and knew not whether she was walking, or flying, or sitting still, or moving on, still she kept her pace, leaning, to be sure, towards the latter part of the discussion, on her uncle's arm, Benson having politically, if not politely, offered himself as supporter to her aunt.

Unromantic and almost unsentimental as this was, the topic deeply exciting and interesting to all, was canvassed rationally and worldlily: there was no sobbing, or shrieking, or raving, or fainting; the subject was not new to the young people, and the old ones were too stout of heart to be shaken. Benson protested as to his industry; his talents would best speak for themselves. Emma declared her detestation for Skinner; and after a protracted debate, without much violence of opposition, Gray desired Benson to take care of the girl, while he and his sister talked the matter over between themselves.

It was a happy walk, and the mead has been spoken of by the parties ever since as hallowed ground; for the discussion between the old people was all "one way;" they had neither of them chick nor child, as they said; they had some fortune; all they had, would be the girl's, and until Benson's talents produced a sufficient harvest to answer all his expectations, the young ones could live with them, and—in short, any thing was better than breaking the poor child's heart: and if they had not foreseen her affection for Benson, they were fools; and if they did foresee it, they ought to have parted them earlier—in short, their whole hearts and souls were centered in their dear Emma, and why should they sacrifice her happiness;—and so it was agreed that instead of a visit from Benson, Gray should see Skinner, and carry with him a formal rejection of his hand from Emma, which was necessary to the completion of her father's intention with respect to the bequest to the school or hospital, and then taking his lawyer with him, the matter might be settled off hand, and the money, which was in the three per cent. consols, be transferred from their names as the trustees, by whom it was to be applied for the benefit

of the foundation in question to that of its treasurer; and this plan, suggested by the old gentleman, was agreed upon, and definitively settled, and forthwith to be carried into execution.

And who shall describe the feelings of the young lovers? Who shall paint the pure joy which filled both their hearts; the bright visions of happiness which burst on their view—the years of delight which seemed in store for them; the result so decisive—so perfectly unexpected when they left home; all doubts ended—all fears at rest. If there be a moment of unalloyed delight in man's life, it is one like this; and yet how often is the cup of happiness dashed from our lips at the moment in which Providence has kindly filled it to the brim!

It would be ungracious to anticipate any such disappointment in the present case, where none seems likely to occur; suffice it to say, that the tempers and spirits of the whole party were in the best possible order; and that while the youthful couple seemed walking on air, so lightly fell their steps, the old pair marched along with surprising agility,—all their pains

unfelt—all their weaknesses forgotten, in the consciousness of having obeyed the dictates of justice and affection, and concluded an affair in which, except wealth, everything seemed combined to ensure the happiness of a worthy young man, and a lovely and excellent young woman.

CHAPTER X.

> Ho! why do you shiver and shake,
> Gaffar Gray?
>
> HOLCROFT.

THE situation in which all parties were suddenly placed, by the interesting discovery made at Skinner's lodgings, was one of considerable delicacy, and somewhat more particularly embarrassing, than even my reader at present imagines; for the fainting fit of Amelrosa, from which she was about to recover as the walking party burst in upon her retirement, returned with redoubled force, at the sight of the invaders, and did not leave her in the second instance, until the arrival of her husband from the playhouse, to inform her that the stage was waiting—

a technical phrase, not signifying, as some may imagine, that she was detaining by her absence any public conveyance on its journey, but that the rehearsal was at a stand-still, for want of her participation.

An attempt to depict the astonishment and confusion of Fuggleston, the absolute distress of Skinner, and the renewed violence of the lady at this second crisis, would be vain. It seemed as if the feelings of the whole party were too strong for utterance, for not one of the group attempted to speak.

Fuggleston's anger at again convicting his wife of infidelity, and detecting her in a renewal of her acquaintance with Skinner, was checked by the recollection, that in order to be re-united to his profitable partner, he had resolved to believe, in spite of all the evidence adduced, that nothing seriously improper had passed between them: while he felt it equally injudicious to permit Skinner to fancy that he believed him entirely innocent, since he had received a large sum of money, as a recompence for the injuries he had sustained by her infidelity.

It seemed indeed impossible for any of the parties to come to any thing like an explanation.

The whole affair was one, which, for the sake of each individual of the trio, it was evident had better be hushed up. Anger or indignation on the part of Fuggleston, would lose the engagement at the theatre. An exposure of Skinner, would inevitably destroy their private respectability, and the chance of making a benefit, by going about to different families, "doing something" to entertain the various parties, which had been purposely arranged during their stay in the town. How to bring about the desirable compact of "silence," was the puzzle for Fuggleston, from whom only any amicable proposition could emanate; for Skinner was as anxious as he, that nothing more should be said about the matter, hoping to explain to Emma in the afternoon, the embarrassing circumstances in which he had been discovered; giving at the same time a pathetic history of Mrs. Fuggleston, whose sorrows in private life might justify the emotion she had betrayed upon seeing an old acquaintance unexpectedly.

This again was full of doubt and difficulty: a story of the nature he now proposed, would but ill agree with the distant manner of the Fugglestons towards him, on the preceding evening at

Mrs. Pimpernel's, or the cool denial of intimacy or even acquaintance with them, which he made to Miss Gray herself. All these matters passed in review through his mind, as Mrs. Fuggleston lay sobbing on the sofa; Skinner standing at the window, beating a tatoo upon the glass, and Fuggleston remaining with his back to the fire, philosophically waiting the recovery of his agitated lady.

"Pray, Amy," said the husband, breaking silence, and apparently unconscious of Skinner's presence, "when shall you be ready to go to the theatre—every body and every thing are waiting for you. If you don't feel yourself equal to go, say so, and I will return and bid them go on without you."

"Oh, my dear Mr. F.," said Amelrosa, "I—cannot—indeed—I cannot go—I want no rehearsal—pray tell them so——"

"I will," said Fuggleston, "and when I return, I hope to find you alone, and in a condition to hear what I shall have to say to you."

Saying which, he quitted the apartment, without even looking at Skinner, who felt much more alarm from the collected quietness of his

manner, than he would have experienced from any violent burst of anger or passion.

"What do you think he means to do?" said Amelrosa, in a tone of alarm; "tell me, Mr. Skinner, what course had I best pursue—only think of his unfortunate return."

"I really am at a loss what to say or how to act," replied Gervase; "the appearance of a renewed connection between us after your reconciliation, must naturally excite a very strong feeling against us both; for myself, I care little, as you know, but for *your* sake there is nothing I would not do—therefore dictate, and I shall obey you."

"The course is evident," said Amelrosa; "leave this place immediately—the secret is now confined to ourselves—he will be appeased. The people here will remain ignorant of the whole story, and I shall be saved."

"Why," said Skinner, more coldly than she expected—"I should be very glad to leave this place and obey your wishes, but—but—there are peculiar circumstances which really seem to render that measure impossible."

"Oh, Skinner!" said the lady, with tears in

her eyes,—"recollect what you have said to me, recollect that you have sworn to me that no other woman ever could chain or charm you—that I alone was the object of your affections: what tie then, even though we are separated, can there be in this hateful place, strong enough to restrict you from doing that which alone can save my character, and heal my wounded, broken spirit."

"I must be candid with you, Amelrosa," said Skinner, "to avoid the imputation of a disregard for your wishes and happiness. I am here on a visit to a family whose niece is shortly to become my wife, and to whom I have been for several years engaged."

"Engaged!" screamed Amelrosa,—"what, was it true then, what they told me last night—is that pert-looking, black-eyed, rosy-cheeked, hideous, awkward girl, to whom you were talking, to be your wife? Engaged! what, at the moment you were swearing eternal fidelity to me, at the moment when you robbed me of that which made me poor indeed—Oh, Skinner, Skinner, this is more than I can bear!"

"Please, Sir," said the maid-servant, entering

the room, "Mr. Gray is in the passage, and wishes to speak to you."

"Gray!" cried Skinner, "where is Mr. Gray?"

"Here, my good fellow," said Gray, "don't let us interrupt the rehearsal,—we can wait till the lady has gone through the scene."

"Good Heavens, Mary!" said Mrs. Fuggleston, in a whisper to the servant girl, "is there any body there?"

"Yes, Ma'am," said the girl, "Mr. Gray and another gentleman, a lawyer, I believe."

"Mr. Skinner," cried Amelrosa, in a moment drying all her sorrowing showers, and throwing a bright beam of playhouse sunshine into her eyes—"Mr. Skinner, *do* come at night and see me act it,—I shall expect you, after having given you the specimen—Clari is one of my favourite hits — good bye — now don't fail, there's a good creature."

Skinner stood amazed—Gray saw his confusion; but he and his friend Mr. Tapes—(a gentleman whom my readers may recollect to have heard of, some two-and-twenty years before, as clerk to Mr. Allsford, the solicitor of Sir Mark Terrington, and who was now comfortably esta-

blished as an eminent attorney, with a plump wife and nine children)—really did believe Mrs. Fuggleston to be rehearsing some tragic character, not imagining that the drama of her real life would afford any scene so pathetic and impassioned; which false impression of theirs, was, as the reader perceives, seized on by Mrs. Fuggleston in a moment, with a quickness and readiness characteristic of the fair sex in general, but particularly so when natural genius and presence of mind have been improved and perfected by an intimate knowledge of dramatic intrigue and theatrical stage effect. Skinner, however surprised at the readiness and rapidity of his fair friend, had not sufficient *tact* to arrange his own ideas, or compose his own shattered spirits so suddenly; and the embarassment under which he laboured was perfectly evident to his visitors—one of whom, the attorney, suggested, that as they had important business with Mr. Skinner, they had perhaps better call again when he was less agitated; still, however, attributing the disordered state of his mind and ideas to the effect produced by a fine bit of acting, which (as she meant it should) the parting remark of the per-

former convinced them had just been exhibited to him.

"No, thank you, Sir," said Skinner, "I am quite ready to proceed to business. Of course I can guess the nature of the affair which we have to discuss; and I am as anxious as you can be to come to a definitive settlement—so that we may get into Somersetshire as soon as possible;" for truth to tell, Skinner hailed the approach of the attorney and the uncle as a promise of speedy arrangement, which, although delicacy prevented his pressing it, would necessarily expedite his departure from a place, getting, as he began to apprehend, somewhat too hot to hold him.

"Perhaps," said Gervase, "we may as well adjourn to Mr. Gray's, for my rooms here are not the most convenient, and——"

"Why, Skinner," said the old man, "I am apprehensive that our adjournment thither would look like an intrusion—perhaps at my friend Tapes's office we may settle our affair, which won't take us long."

"Where you please, Gray," said Skinner, gaining courage by time: "a good thing can't be done in an ill place."

And according to the suggestion of old Gray, away went the party to the residence of the lawyer, distinguished in one of the principal streets of the city by its large bright brass knocker; where, having been ushered into the back office, the trio placed themselves at the table of the learned attorney.

When seated, however, it became pretty evident that two of the party were not at their ease; and while Gervase, in the plenitude of security, threw himself into a chair in the most dignified manner, Gray and Tapes were exchanging looks as to who should commence the unpleasant topic which they had to discuss; indeed, Gray felt more embarrassment than he expected, from having, since his determination to reject the squire, discovered, or rather having fancied he had discovered, the intimacy apparently existing between Amelrosa and his friend, to proceed only from the admiration of an acknowledged theatrical amateur for the professional talents of an actress, and that the interviews and conversations to which reference had been previously made by Emma and Benson, were in fact nothing more than "touches of her trade," exhibited before Skinner, in

order to obtain his opinion, and as it might be, approbation: however, he had now openly declared his determination to the young people, and not the wealth of Golconda would have induced him to retract—still a compunctious feeling worried him; not that he was about to dismiss Gervase, but because the ground he had taken did not appear sufficiently strong to justify such an open rupture with the approved son-in-law and the long tried friend of his deceased and respected brother.

"Well," said the old gentleman to the lawyer, "will you just open the business, Mr. Tapes—I——"

"Hem,—why—" said Tapes,—"there is—hem—a little delicacy—hem—in touching upon the—hem——"

"Delicacy," cried Skinner, "none that I see—the matter has been settled for us—time has softened down the abruptness of the affair, and so, Mr. T., all I wish Mr. Gray to fix is the day—the happy day—for to tell you the truth, Bagsden calls me, my budding orchards invite me, my springing grass beckons me as its blades bend before the breeze, and I anticipate with pleasure the carrying my bonny bride to

what I trust will be her happy home—at least if I can make it so."

Old Gray's eyes filled with tears as Skinner sketched the picture which another artist was destined to finish.

"I think," continued Skinner, addressing himself to the lawyer, "Mr. Gray will feel perfectly secure, that as far as my endeavours to make her comfortable can be successful, the daughter of my excellent friend, his worthy brother, will not be very miserable. I have as pretty a property to look at, as any man of my acres, let the next be who he may; and I have a good cellar, and a spare bed or two, for my friends, whenever they are kind enough to come and see me."

The reader, to appreciate the sincerity of my hero in this munificent display of hospitality, should never forget, that Bagsden Parva, in the county of Somerset, was, as the crow flies, distant from the spot where this liberal invitation was given, one hundred and sixty-six miles—a journey which when increased by the sinuosities of the roads, Skinner conceived impracticable by either a gouty gentleman of seventy-two, or an

attorney in full practice, with a plump wife and nine children.

"Why, Sir," said Tapes,—"hem—that is—I—you see—have a rather—hem—unpleasant duty to perform—but—I hope—hem—that is—I am sure—at least I think—hem—that you will feel and understand that I am only acting for others—hem— —"

"Unpleasant duty?" said Skinner, "why how now—I——"

"The truth is, Skinner," interrupted Gray, "there is no use haggling or boggling about it. Emma has resolved to surrender her fortune to her feelings, and has come to a determination to decline the honour of the alliance you and her poor father intended for her."

"Decline!" said Gervase; "what, then, are the fifteen thousand pounds to go to those grasshoppers in the Grammar-school? She must be mad—and if she is not, she will drive me so."

"Why, you see," said Tapes, "young ladies—hem—that is, ladies who are young—you understand—take—you see—hem—a sort of—view—you understand—of this sort of subject

—hey—very different—that is—hem—not exactly the same—you see—as men—hem—of mature age—"

"And I must say, Skinner, if truth is to be told," said Gray, "that you have not gone the readiest way to conciliate the affections of a young creature like Emma; your conduct about that actress—the whole of which burst upon her at once——"

"What, has anybody mentioned that affair to her," said Skinner, "after all the pains I have taken to conceal it?"

"Mention it? Why, did not she see it?" cried the old man. "Faith, I saw no great pains you took to hide it."

"Oh," said my hero, finding that he had misunderstood Gray's meaning, and miscalculated the extent of his niece's knowledge—"the fainting—the—rehearsal—the—ah!—I see—"

"However," continued Gray, "I believe she rather fixes on that as a justification of a foregone conclusion, and the ostensible cause of a determination made before the cause existed—be that as it may, Skinner, I assure you I do it with sorrow and regret; but I have to tender a formal refusal on Emma's part, to fulfil her

share of the compact proposed, and the consequent abandonment of the fortune bequeathed her, contingent on the marriage."

Words cannot adequately describe the amazement of Skinner at this announcement; that he, the approved of all the Taunton belles, the lady-killer general of the community, and the conqueror of the all-powerful Fuggleston, should be rejected by a mere country Miss, even although fifteen thousand pounds were thrown into the scale, seemed a new miracle; refusing the premiership, with a blue ribband into the bargain, appeared a trifle to it, and it was some time before he could be brought to believe its possibility; however, between the hesitation of Tapes and the bluntness of Gray, he became gradually enlightened, and by degrees convinced of the truth of what, at first, no person could make him accurately comprehend.

"But, my dear Gray," said Skinner, "how is such a determination to be accounted for?"

"De Gustibus," said Gray, "we can't think for other people, or see with the eyes of girls of nineteen. Emma, I rather imagine, has formed an attachment for our young Apelles, and your arrival has brought things to a crisis: of

course, if she chooses to relinquish her fortune, I cannot help it."

"But," said Skinner, "the worst part of the relinquishment is, that no human being is to be benefited by it about whom we care sixpence; for what is it to us whether this foundation school has so many more acres of land attached to it or not?"

"Land," said Tapes, "purchase of land—hey—have either of you got—hey—that is—in—you understand—a copy of—that is—the will of the late—hey—you see—I mean of Mr. Gray—father of the lady—hey?"

"I have it here, in my pocket," said Gray, "and you will find it expressly stated there, that this fifteen thousand pounds is bequeathed to Skinner and myself, to hold in trust for Emma, until she attains her twentieth year, at which time, if she marries that worthy gentleman there, the said sum is to be paid over to the said Emma; but if she formally rejects the said Skinner, then and in that case, as the will says, this fifteen thousand pounds is to be laid out in the purchase of land, for the use and benefit of the Green-coat School, where, as I have before said, my poor brother was brought up."

"Hey—land"—said Tapes, "very odd circumstance—never saw the will—that is—perhaps you will permit me—I—just—you see—hey—to read—that is, to look it over—strange circumstance—umph—hey."

Here Tapes began to read, in a subdued tone, the different clauses of the old gentleman's will.

"Well," said Skinner, in an agony of disappointment, "I *do* think this termination to the chapter of accidents, is the most provoking, when I consider what I have suffered—what I have undergone—I really begin to think myself qualified for Bedlam."

"About the hair, if not the head," said Gray; "but what matters, Gervase? you have a comfortable fortune of your own, a snug place and pleasant society. A marriage with a girl against her inclination, could be nothing satisfactory, and, depend upon it, all will be for the best in the separation."

"Yes, but my dear friend," said Skinner, "the waste of the money."

"Waste!" exclaimed the old man; "no waste, Skinner; charity is no waste, and there are children yet unborn, who will bless the

benevolence of my brother, and the perverseness of my niece."

"I apprehend not," said Tapes, "this is a case—humph—you see—that is—it is a very extraordinary—did any professional—hey—that is—any man in the profession, draw up, or prepare, or see this will—hey—?"

"I cannot say," said Gray—"do you remember, Skinner?"

"I do remember that no professional man saw it," said Skinner. "Gray, poor fellow, consulted me about it; and was very, very anxious to marry his child to me, and suggested what you now see in the will, and I, never anticipating a refusal, and not wishing to benefit myself, in case of such an event, coincided with him in opinion, and the whole will was written one evening by himself, and all the clauses concerning myself and Emma, he read aloud to me, and we shook hands on the bargain."

"And no—hey—that is nobody else," said Tapes, "knew any thing about the bequest."

"No; the witnesses were people in the neighbourhood," said Skinner. "Gray thought of sending for an attorney, for he never had occa-

sion for a regular one, but I hated attorneys all my life."

"Umph!" said Tapes.

"That is, I did not hate attorneys," said Skinner, "and I am sure I mean no offence, but I thought it would put my poor friend to a needless charge; for, as I said—I remember at the time, six and eight pence and six and eight pence, together make the sum of thirteen and fourpence, and the sum of thirteen and fourpence saved, is the sum of thirteen and fourpence gained."

"In the present case," said Tapes, "it might have been advantageously laid out—at least—hey—that is, as far as the green coats are concerned—as it is—all your—hey—that is—all the apprehensions you entertained—umph—that is to say, the regrets—I don't mean regrets—but—hey—that is the—in fact they are regrets of Mr. Skinner, about the waste of the—that is—the misapplication of—you understand—the—umph—that is—the fifteen thousand pounds—are—hey—umph—needless—"

"I know that, Sir," said Skinner: "what's done can't be undone, and every shilling must go—there's no help for it."

"Excuse me," said Tapes, "your general information is unexceptionable, but—hey—your law—umph—is not so convincing—not one shilling of this money—umph—that is—the fifteen thousand pounds—can be laid out as the testator purposed."

"No!" said Skinner—"then who gets it—the residuary legatee—?"

"Not so," said Tapes—"the next of kin, which I take—umph—that is—hey—you understand—I think to be Miss Emma Gray herself—the 9 Geo. II. cap. 36,—distinctly—hey—that is—clearly—you understand—declares, that no sum of money to be laid out in lands or tenements—which—hey—as I take it—umph—that is—this is—shall be given for or charged with any charitable uses whatsoever—you see—that is, unless by deed indented—that is, you see, hey—in the presence of two witnesses, and enrolled in the Court of Chancery."

"Is that the law?" said old Gray.

"Statute of Mortmain—Sir—eh—9 George II. cap. 36," said Tapes—"and all that astonishes—that is—hey—not astonishes—for you understand, I have learned not to be astonished

at any thing—is—that—hey—you see—umph —this should have remained unnoticed—hey—"

"I never asked an opinion about it," said Skinner; "I didn't choose to throw away my money."

"But what is the result?" cried old Gray.

"The result," said Tapes—"why—hey—that is—one never decides hastily—but—umph!—you understand—I believe the fifteen thousand pounds to remain the property of your brother's next of kin, whom I take to be your niece."

"Why then, Skinner, this piece of economy of yours," said Gray, "has actually kept the money in the family."

"Of which fact, Mr. Gray," said Skinner, rising from his seat, his cheeks flushing and his eyes flashing, "you, I have very little doubt, were perfectly aware when you permitted me to come on this fool's errand after the girl; but I am not by any means so well satisfied of the law of your attorney, as I am of the duplicity of his client. I shall obtain a copy of the will, and I shall see whether the decision of Mr. Tapes is agreeable to the statute, and whether a court of equity will not interfere to fulfil the intention of my respected friend."

"My dear Skinner," said Gray—"moderate your anger—I was as ignorant of the legal objection to the execution of my brother's intention as you; and as for Emma, she is neither at a time of life nor of a disposition to do either an unkind or a cunning thing: set your mind at rest about that, and rather rejoice than lament at the preservation of her property."

"I cannot rejoice, Mr. Gray," said Skinner, "at any thing which militates against the expressed wish and desire of your excellent brother, and I am resolved not to let this matter drop here; and upon another point I am equally determined, which is, that I shall not employ *your* attorney to advise or consult with. I feel that I have been extremely ill-used, wantonly played upon, and made ridiculous, and I should be wanting in proper respect to myself, if I delayed my departure from this place one hour. I shall therefore go; but you may depend upon hearing from my legal adviser upon this matter; and you will forgive me if in parting from you I can only express my regret that I have been made the dupe of a party, the butt of a faction, the——"

"My dear Skinner, let me assure you," said Gray, "that you are mistaken—positively mis-

taken—besides," said Gray, "I see no cause for this violence; for let who may get the money, you never could have possessed it, unless Emma fulfilled the conditions of her father's will."

"True," said Skinner, "but unless you and she had been perfectly aware of the defect in the bequest, she *would* have fulfilled those conditions. At any rate, I know enough of equity to know that the disposition of the Court of Chancery is strong in favour of the spirit and real intention of a will, and you may rely upon it that I will at least make a struggle to vindicate the memory and support the wishes of my respected friend. I am not angry," said Skinner, actually foaming at the mouth,—"not in the least,—but I see no necessity for being any longer an object of ridicule, and so I will commission you, if you will permit me, to make my excuses to the ladies, and return to my quiet, peaceable home, at Bagsden, which, thank God, nothing can rob me of; where I may contemplate with a calm, placid, serene satisfaction, the gay doings of those who are content to enrich themselves by the violation of the last wishes of their nearest relative."

Saying which, Skinner, who, although he had

lost the fifteen thousand pounds and the wife, had carried his other point of getting away from the Fugglestons, seized his hat and dashed out of the apartment, leaving Gray and Tapes in a stupor of amazement at his anger and his energy; and before they could reach the quiet home of the former, the injured lover and disappointed suitor was making active preparations for his return to the metropolis, dead beaten by his own cunning, and out of sorts with all the world.

But strange and more important events were destined to occur just at this particular period of my history, for some of which the reader may perhaps be tolerably well prepared; others may come upon him by surprise.

I think for the present I shall leave him to repose in happy ignorance, while Amelrosa may be supposed to be preparing for her appearance on the stage, and the Grays and Benson talking over the adventures of the day previous, and anticipating the pleasure of witnessing her performance; for however some town-bred ladies may censure the unaffected pleasure felt and expressed by Emma, at the departure of her affianced lover, she, having no disguise and seeing no necessity for any, saw no particular

reason for denying herself the enjoyment she had previously anticipated of visiting the theatre in the evening—an enjoyment not in a small degree heightened by the circumstance of Benson's attending her thither, in the acknowledged capacity of an accepted and admitted suitor, being " the first time of his appearance in that character."

CHAPTER XI.

She made it plain that human passion
Was ordered by predestination;
That if weak women went astray,
Their stars were more in fault then they.
Whole tragedies she had by heart;
Entered into Roxana's part;
To triumph in her rival's blood;
The action certainly was good.

PRIOR.

In all the pursuits of small pleasures, there invariably occur so many little worries, that if the balance were fairly struck, nine times in ten, the result would appear on the annoyance side of the account.

While exhausting the awful half-hour before dinner, in conversation with the prettiest girl in the room, the one with whom we are most intimate, and whom we decidedly the most admire of the party, certain we are when the announcement of the banquet is made, to hear

a summons by name from the lady of the house, to take down some hideous object, cold in manner, plain in person, deficient in intellect, and overflowing with affectation; the wife or daughter, it may be, of some person for whom we have a particular dislike, and with whom we have in all probability had some former disagreement.

At a ball, sure it is, without more management than falls to the lot of all young ladies, that a girl invariably fails to get the desired partner, who is generally, in the chapter of accidents, immediately opposed to her in the set, evidently delighted with the smiles and conversation of the only Miss in the room absolutely odious to the agitated witness of the flirtation; and in all these cases the restlessness betrayed, the affected indifference, the real interest, and the wonderful awkwardness of the distressed individuals, who hover about the seats or standing places of the desired objects, anxious beyond measure to secure a position, but fearing to make so bold an adventure, are to the calm, placid, and disinterested observer, marvellously pleasant.

This had hitherto been felt by Emma and

Frederick, when they were in public together. Unauthorized and unacknowledged as a lover, Frederick, after having squeezed, and pushed, and worried himself into a place near his beloved, found himself universally circumvented, by some Captain Macpherson, of a Highland regiment quartered in the neighbourhood, marching into the box, with whiskers as red as his coat, and a huge sword and belt, and a cap and boots, clattering and clanking over the seats; bowing graciously to Miss Gray, senior; shaking hands cordially with her brother, and finally subsiding into the place next Emma: while Lieutenant Mackenzie of the same corps, was sure to take up a similar position upon the enemy's other flank, in the front row of the next box; thus effectually shutting out the beloved of his heart, and spoiling the whole "pleasure of the evening" for the young artist. But on the night in question, fearing no one, caring for no remarks, and attending to no suggestions but those of love, the accepted Frederick, with his own Emma on his arm, led the way to their places, and depositing his treasure by his side, seated himself so as to exclude all the flirting beaux who were wont to usurp the rural belle. The Pimpernels joined them, to whom,

of course, "my Aunt" had, in the course of the day, developed enough of the family history, to induce Mrs. P. to shake Emma by the hand, with a super-violent ardour; while Miss Wagstaff performed a similar ceremony upon Benson, with an expression of countenance, which evinced her perfect knowledge of the termination of all their troubles, and her entire satisfaction at the happy result.

Gratified and gratifying as these persons and events were, the audience, which was closely packed to witness the London prodigies, appeared not particularly to relish the unusual delay in the commencement of the performance. The fiddles were tuned—the lamps appeared—little bell rung—gods began to get fidgetty, and thump and knock the galleries about—whistles reverberated through the building, and curling pieces of orange peel lay scattered on the stage. "God save the King," played by the band, called the spectators on their feet, and the national air was encored—then ensued a silence—then came a burst of noise—bells again—more tuning, and at length a sort of overture—this ended, another pause—here riot and confusion commenced—the old

"O. P.'s irritamenta malorum,"

seemed to be revived in the persons of the present company, and yells and hootings, loud and long, resounded; nor did they cease until the manager, who had been frequently called for, at length made his appearance, looking like a ghost.

The sight of the "Directeur general," was the signal for silence; and after having bestowed upon him a tribute of personal approbation, according to annual custom, the audience were hushed into a calm as perfect as ever reigned in the solitudes of a desart.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the manager, "a circumstance has occurred, of a nature so extraordinary, that I have to entreat more than your ordinary good nature while I make it known to you. Mrs. Fuggleston, whose services I had secured for your entertainment at a considerable expence, and who was this evening to have made her first appearance before you in the melo-dramatic part of Clari, has not arrived at the theatre. Messengers have been dispatched to her residence, from which she is absent, and has been for some hours. Mr. Fuggleston, who is ready to appear before you, is equally ignorant of the cause of her disappearance with myself, and under these circumstances, we have

only to hope for your usual indulgence in waiting until some further intelligence be received, or in permitting us to perform the farce of the Village Lawyer before the Opera, instead of after it."

To describe the tumult and consternation which filled all ranks, and excited all parties at this awful crisis, would be vain: although everybody admitted that if Mrs. Fuggleston was not to be found, she could not act in their presence, still nobody could submit to sit down calmly and quietly under the loss of the lady and her talents.

Patience, however, is a virtue which the rural critics seemed most kindly on this occasion determined to exercise, and accordingly having admitted the proposition of performing that rare and excellent novelty, the Village Lawyer, in the first instance, they bore the change with apparent contentment, applauded the piece in its progress, and baa'd a sheepish chorus of approbation at its close, in the most perfect good nature.

But when more delays—more whistlings—more ringings—more orange peels, and more thumpings had occurred, and still no Clari, the riot for a time appeased, broke out afresh, and

the manager, terrified for the fate of his theatre, and hardly conscious of what he was saying, announced the fact that it had been ascertained that Mrs. Fuggleston had abruptly quitted the place in company with a gentleman, who had arrived from London but a few days previous, and whose meeting with her here was not supposed to be entirely accidental.

Such an announcement, in such a place, had never before been heard: but it seemed absolutely necessary to make it, not only to appease public disapprobation, but to tranquillize private solicitude; for the more feeling part of the audience began immediately to wonder what could have happened, and think how shocking such a disappearance, unaccounted for, in some way or other, must be; so that the manager's anxiety, acted upon, in no small degree, by Fuggleston's spirit of vengeance, induced a disclosure which ought never to have been made, and which rendered all farther concealment of Mrs. F.'s improprieties impossible.

Then ran the whisper of inquiry round the house—Who was the gallant? What his name? Whence he came? and the responsive sound of "Skinner," was heard, originating, it should

seem, with the Pimpernels, to whom Mrs. Fuggleston had, in the morning, expressed a strong interest in that individual.

Under all the circumstances, Emma, who found herself, by implication, made an object of public attention in the little world of the cloistered city, begged to retire with her party; and *faute de Clari*, some other piece was acted, neither interesting in itself, nor likely to attract any share of her attention, which, it must be confessed, was tolerably well occupied in considering the conduct of her late affianced, now discarded lover; which to her, as indeed it did to her seniors, appeared wholly inexplicable.

There are moments of our lives when we are acted upon by sudden impulses in the most extraordinary manner. Skinner's temper was ruffled—his spirit roused—his anger excited by the unqualified rejection of Emma, and the probable security of her property, in the teeth of a will upon which he relied mainly for securing her hand, and of the flaw in which he was quite convinced Gray and all his family were perfectly aware, even when they suffered him to make his visit and his offer. He quitted the

room in which those whom he considered conspirators against his peace and respectability were closeted, and passing by the inn where his servant was, directed him to have horses ready in an hour, to take him from the scene of his disasters, and repaired to his lodgings, from which place he was shortly to take his departure.

Irritated, mortified, and in despair, he again encountered the syren Amelrosa—again found her in tears, and in an agitation hardly describable. Their feelings, however differently excited, sympathized in their general character, and the squire confided to her all that had occurred, and the defeat of his schemes and expectations, all his anger, all his sorrow, and all his disappointment were poured into the attentive ear of the divine Fuggleston.

"What an event!" said Amelrosa, "how extraordinary! how marvellous!—at a moment when my husband, irritated at finding you here, which *he* knew was altogether accidental, has loaded me with reproaches, bestowed upon me his bitterest maledictions, has insulted me with language I cannot repeat, and even threatened

me with forcible expulsion—where would he be if I did as he has bidden me?

"Your wretchedness," said Skinner, softened in a moment by the tears of the lady, "is partly owing to your returning to him: after what I had done, I thought you would have kept clear of scenes which agitate you, and of a person whose affections——"

"Oh, don't talk of affection," cried Amelrosa, "his name, the very sight of him are become odious to me—his conduct—his conversation—are now beyond endurance; and if I had any mode of disentangling myself from the hated engagement which brought me here, I would quit him eternally, and retire from the world upon what your considerate kindness has secured me."

Economy, the god of Skinner's idolatry, at this moment seemed to descend into the room, and illuminate his devoted worshipper. He had been rejected, traduced, driven away by the Grays; the sight of Amelrosa renewed ten thousand passionate feelings; her tears, her sorrows, the brutality of her husband, all urged him to make her the offer of separating herself eternally from that odious disturber of her

happiness; when it suddenly flashed into his mind, that in the seclusion of Bagsden she would be an excellent manager of all his domestic matters; that having made one compromise with the husband, no further damage would arise in that quarter; and that having settled £150 a year upon the lady, he should by taking her to himself, either secure the whole of that agreeable annuity, or at least have the satisfaction of sharing the pleasure of spending it with her.

It is, as my readers will clearly perceive, wholly impossible to defend the conduct of my hero, or palliate that of the lady; but their indignation will be more properly directed in the present case, against his parsimony than against his morality, inasmuch as feeling himself ridiculed, despised, and discarded, his natural disposition to stinginess led him to adopt the most economical mode by which he could at one blow solace his disappointment, enliven his solitude, and alleviate theaffliction of one with whom he had passed so many agreeable hours—who once was the idol of his affections, and who had surrendered herself to his protestations: and let the heart of a man be as callous as it may his disposition as fickle, his charac-

ter as profligate—the recollection of one who has been to him, what Amelrosa had been to Gervase, never flashes into the mind, unaccompanied by a thousand tenderer feelings than the libertine is generally supposed capable of cherishing or even comprehending.

It is useless, however, wasting time, in a lengthened disquisition into the motives to action by which Skinner was governed; the facts are what we have to do with; and the result of the interview and the impassioned conversation between him and the lady, was a resolution on her part to abandon the stage, husband, and all, and fly to the sanctuary which the quiet shades of Bagsden promised, enlivened as she well knew they were, by plenty of good eating and drinking—diversions for which the fair dame, with all her sentimentality and experience of the world, had not yet lost her relish. She certainly did hint at eventual marriage, but no hopes for that existed, except in the case of death or divorce; and although the doctors of physic are much more reasonable in their charges for securing the former, than the doctors of law for completing the latter, the one it was considered immoral to wish for, and the other unreasonable to expect; and so at half past six

o'clock, the very witching time of night when Mrs. Fuggleston had promised to be at the theatre, (her husband having "dined out,") the fair and frail creature turned to the left hand instead of the right, and found Skinner waiting in his carriage at the corner of Tadpole-lane, just outside of Friar's Gate, into which vehicle she unhesitatingly stepped; and long before the farce of the Village Lawyer was concluded at the theatre, the re-united couple were enjoying themselves at dinner, eleven miles from the starting post, in the full security, that let his suspicions be what they might, Fuggleston was not the sort of man to follow the fugitive a second time, after having once taken her back, being, as he must be, quite certain of getting nothing more by detecting her infidelity again.

A strange contrast was afforded by the mode in which Skinner and Amelrosa, and Frederick and Emma, passed the remainder of the evening. At Gray's, all the wonderment ceased when the servant at Skinner's late lodgings was examined: it then appeared evident in what company Amelrosa had departed; and then, to say truth, and do Emma justice, for the first time she felt *perfectly* contented with the rejection of

her father's friend, and his consequent abdication: then all her proper feminine feelings were roused into a sense of indignation at the heartless and outrageous conduct of the aspirer to her hand and fortune; and she congratulated herself most sincerely upon the decision to which she had almost intuitively come. And then the delightful conversation of Benson, which of course being a lover, was about no earthly thing but himself and his Emma; the sweet interchange of affectionate words; the heart-felt smiles; the suppressed sighs; the ten thousand engaging and interesting circumstances—interesting, be it observed, to no human being, save themselves—of that happy evening, were worth an age of indifferent sensation; and when Frederick took his leave for the night, their young hearts beat high with love, and hope, and joyful anticipation.

Differently, indeed, did Amelrosa and Skinner get through their time; Mrs. Fuggleston indulged in long and protracted details of ill-usage, by which to justify her defection from her husband; and innumerable instances did she quote of what were to serve as proofs of her latent, yet unquenched, affection for her para-

mour; still, however, his happiness was not complete—his contentment not secured.

Strange, perhaps, it may appear, but there was yet of the party one of whom Skinner stood in awe; one his inferior in every point, in birth, in rank, in education, and intellect—but yet whose presence excited an uneasiness in Skinner's mind—at which many deeper dyed with guilt may sneer—but which hung over him like a cloud, and weighed down his spirits.

This individual was no other than his old and faithful servant, Joseph, who, for years, had loved and respected his master; who, whenever his master's goodness of heart and excellence of character were questioned, would vouch for both, and maintain them with his blood if it were necessary. His father had lived servant with Skinner's father—and the simple, good, kind-hearted man had been brought up under the roof of Bagsden, in all the ways of religion, and in all the veneration of virtue. The visits of the players, though harmless perhaps in themselves, were in Joseph's view of the thing, somewhat bordering on profanation; as, indeed, the reader may judge by his former distaste for the Fugglestons on their journey; but no man could

reproach an inmate of the squire's house with immorality, much less the squire himself.

This was the opinion the servant had formed of the master, and the master knew it; and it had ever been his pride to support the respectability which his inferiors were all justly willing to accord him; and this evening was to be the termination of that respectability on the one side, and the consequent respectfulness on the other: on this evening, Skinner was to betray himself to his menial, in the shape of a libertine and profligate; the step, indeed, had been partly taken on their departure from Emma's city, and Joseph, the simplest soul on earth, had already been directed to call the lady who travelled with his master, Mrs. Skinner, although he knew her to be Mrs. Fuggleston; this order puzzled and mortified him: but there were subsequent events to occur. His master and the lady were to travel as man and wife. What the man's feelings of doubt and suspicion might be, I know not, when the preliminary directions were given: but sure it is, that Skinner's resolution to do wrong failed more from the awe he felt of the honest integrity of his faithful

servant, than it would under the frowns of his superiors or the reproaches of his equals.

Skinner felt that he would disburse a much larger sum than he was ordinarily inclined to waste of his *menus plaisirs*, to be quit of this unconscious spy—this innocent tormentor; and as he sat listening to the agreeable conversation of Mrs. Fuggleston, his thoughts were running upon some mode of ridding himself of the torment his conscience and consciousness had created.

"Bagsden must be looking pretty now," said the lady: "those well remembered trees will be budding freshly—there is not one that I shall not hail with pleasure, as an old acquaintance."

"The spring, I dare say, is forward in the west," said Skinner; "I used always to be in the west country at this season."

"We soon shall be there, I hope," said Amelrosa: "there, shut out from the world, we can laugh at its sorrows, and all those turmoils to which I have been so long subjected.—I wonder, by the way, how they are going on at the theatre without me."

"I wonder," said Skinner, "if they guess where you are. As for the Grays, I have no

doubt that they will pretty soon surmise the partner of your flight; for the girl herself seemed quite prepared—at least by what her uncle said—to pre-determine something violently wrong between us in the only moment she saw us together; however, they may rest assured, that they shall not enjoy their comfort quite undisturbed. The moment I reach town, I shall apply to the solicitor who transacts all my business in London, to endeavour to prevent such a perversion of old Gray's intentions."

"You must not agitate yourself too much," said Amelrosa, "upon this point, or I shall begin to suspect that you, somewhat too deeply for my happiness, lament the failure of your matrimonial alliance. For *my* part, I see nothing you have to regret; the girl has good eyes, and good teeth, and good hair, and a fine-*ish* complexion; but her figure is bad; and besides, all these attractions fade and fail without a heart, and a mind; and of those, I am sure, she has none. Now we, who understand each other's disposition and character ——"

At this point of the conversation, and while Skinner was remarking to himself, the easy and familiar manner in which Amelrosa had plu-

ralized herself, by the regular adoption of the "we," when discussing their future plans,—a violent knocking was heard at the door of the drawing-room, where they were seated.

"Good heavens, it's he!" cried the lady, starting from her chair.

"Who?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Mr. F., as sure as God made apples," cried the terrified Thespian.

"What's to be done?" said Skinner, whose hair, had Messrs. Wilson and Wilks mercifully left him any, would have stood on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

"Stop an instant," cried the experienced artist, and with a melo-dramatic rush, she was hidden behind one of the window curtains in the twinkling of an eye.

The knocking was repeated.

"Come in, come in," said Skinner.

And then entered, with a waiter, Joseph, the faithful Joseph, as pale as death—bearing in his hand a London newspaper, just arrived.

"Oh, Zur, Zur, Zur, what wool us do? what wool us do?" said the trembling fellow.

"What's the matter?" cried Skinner.

"Your servant has just read some very bad news, in the paper, concerning you, Sir," said the waiter, wishing to break the event gradually.

"Well, what is it?" said Skinner.

"Here's the paper, Sir," said Joseph, "oh, do ye read it yourself—its all gone, Zur, every bit on um is gone, not one little morsel on um is left——"

"What d'ye mean, Joseph?" cried Gervase.

"Bagsden, Sir, Bagsden, all be gone, Zur—all be down — every bit on um burnt to a zinder."

"Bagsden burnt!" cried Mrs. Fuggleston, rushing from behind the curtain, to the infinite horror of Joseph and the waiter.

"Ees, Mrs. Fug., ees, Mum," said Joseph; "all gone, poor Mother May, and all—oh, dear, oh, dear!"

"Stop, stop," said Skinner, "less noise will do—let us see."

And Skinner read——

"On Friday night, about eleven o'clock, a dreadful fire broke out at the residence of Gervase Skinner, Esq., at Bagsden, near Taunton, in Somersetshire, which totally consumed

the whole of that venerable mansion, together with the barns, stables, and outhouses, four ricks of wheat, together with all the stock of hay, beans, barley, and oats in the stack-yard. We regret to add that several valuable horses fell a prey to the devouring element.

"The accident arose from the inadvertence of an old woman of the name of May, who was left in charge of the premises, while the rest of the servants were absent at some neighbouring gentleman's house, and who fell asleep, leaving a lighted candle near the window curtains of the room in which she was waiting their return: this poor old creature was seriously injured.

"Mr. Skinner, the worthy proprietor, is at present absent from home—we believe in the North of England, to which part of the country an engagement of the tenderest nature it is understood has led him."

"This *is* a blow, indeed," said Skinner, throwing down the paper in despair.

"But it is all insured, I suppose," said Amelrosa.

"Not one shilling," replied Gervase. "I never would insure, 'upon principle;' it not only appeared to me to be throwing good money

after bad, but even like throwing good money away for nothing at all."

"It was all that ould Mother May as did it," said Joseph, fully remembering, as indeed did every servant in the establishment, that poor Fanny Carpenter's dismissal was effected by the influence of Amelrosa.

"Poor dear creature," said Amelrosa, affecting to weep a little, "I hope she is not seriously hurt."

"Mother May, indeed," said Skinner, hardly knowing what he said; then turning to the attendants he desired them to withdraw, and he would consider what was best to be done; "this is a severe misfortune," said he—"the home of my heart—the retreat to which I looked forward—all gone!"

"But you have other property?" said Amelrosa, inquiringly, and somewhat anxiously.

"Of course I have," replied the simple squire; "but this place was every thing to me —I loved it for my father's sake—I love it for its own sake—I—I should like to push forward towards London to-night—I ——"

"What earthly good can that do?" said Mrs. Fuggleston, who had ordered some escalopped

oysters and roasted Portugal onions for supper, and who had no notion of sacrificing the delights of so delicate a repast, to a feeling of regret for an old house which could be rebuilt, or a parcel of corn which might be replaced the next year. "Let me advise you, my dear friend, stop here to-night; to-morrow we can start as early as you please."

"Then I'll tell you what I'll do," said Skinner, anxious even in the midst of his calamities, to delay as long as possible the *denouement* of his very intimate connection with his fair friend from his faithful servant; "Joseph shall go on to-night, and secure us horses at the next stage; or indeed, if there be any coach up the road, he may as well take the shortest route to where Bagsden once stood, and gain all the information upon the subject of this sad misfortune that he can—I'll go and see about it."

And accordingly Skinner quitted the apartment, for the purpose in fact of getting rid of a troublesome witness of his fall and folly, leaving Amelrosa in a state of very uncomfortable perplexity. She knew pretty well that a very important part of Gervase's worldly wealth was centered in his paternal residence, and she

began to calculate how the destruction of that property, uninsured, might affect her allowance, and whether she had not somewhat too hastily abandoned her profession and connections under the influence of hopes and expectations, not now perhaps likely to be realized. The arrival, however, of a waiter with a nice clean, fresh smelling table cloth, ready to cover the supper table, suddenly diverted the current of her thoughts, and she did not consider it unworthy her care to place herself in an attitude as regarded her symmetrical figure, and in a light as respected her somewhat *passé* face, to excite the admiration of the fellow who was disposing the knives and forks, and spoons, and cruets, upon the table to the best possible advantage—of such a degraded and debased *caste* is the desire to charm, which exists in vulgar minds and meretricious dispositions—Nothing on earth equals it, except the anxiety of a Whig for mob popularity.

The man, more modest, and not knowing who the lady was, scarce raised his eyes in the direction of her seat, and before any thing had been said or done to excite his curiosity or attract his attention, Skinner returned, having carried his point, found a coach actually at the door with

its passengers supping in a smoky parlour below, by which he had dispatched Joseph, convinced in his own mind that he could do no good by this manœuvre, except indeed, withdrawing him from the present scene of action, a locality, which it must be confessed the news which he had received in it, did not much improve in his mind.

However, it was clear that sighs, although they may raise a flame, are unavailing in rebuilding a house once burned down; and Skinner suffered himself to be solaced and soothed by his fair companion, who contrived, before bedtime, to ascertain from the squire, that besides and beyond this house and property at Bagsden, (for the land proved only to be leasehold, with a clause, compelling the tenant to rebuild to the full value of the house in case of fire) he was actually a possessor of the sum of fifty-four thousand pounds, which was laid out in mortgages upon the beautiful and valuable estates of some great lord, with a long name, and produced him, (which, all things considered, she could scarcely have believed, but for his positive asseveration,) no less a sum than three thousand two hundred and forty pounds a-year.

"That is a prodigious fine income, besides Bagsden," said Mrs. Fuggleston.

"It is, I admit," said Skinner, who, close and cautious as he was, had suffered himself to be piqued into a boast of his sufficiency in pecuniary matters, thus falling into the snare which his artful companion had laid for him, under the influence of her fascinations, and three glasses of particularly agreeable, and not very weak, hot punch, which she persuaded him to take, in order to drown the recollection of his loss, and the demolition of his favourite residence.

"But," continued my hero, "it would not have been so fine if I had not managed my matters carefully and cleverly. The interest of money in England is, perhaps injudiciously, limited to five per cent.—I say injudiciously, for I do not see, I confess, why a man should not make as much of his money as of any other commodity he happens to possess—however, so it is; so what do I do? I put my money out at mortgage upon estates in Ireland, where, as perhaps you don't know, we are allowed to receive six per cent. for the use of it."

"Indeed!" said Amelrosa, whose ears drank greedily the delicious account of my poor hero's property.

"There, and in the West-Indies," said Skinner, "we may get six per cent.: but I preferred Ireland to the colonies, for although they are both rather ticklish, as I take it, the one from the labour of the papist, and the other from the cares of the Canters, still Ireland is nearer at hand; and a lord of parliament is a more respectable man to deal with, than a wishy-washy sangaree-drinking, segar-smoking, sugar-making planter, whose throat may be cut by his slaves, any fine night, and whose estate may be blown into the sea, any bad one; so I fixed upon Ireland; and lucky it is now that I did not go speculating in the mad twelvemonths, but stuck to the acres—the dirty acres. Now that my poor, pretty, pretty Bagsden is gone, what should I have done if I had not? Oh, that old foolish body, Mrs. May!"

"I remember her, do I not?" said Amelrosa.

"Yes, you do indeed," said Skinner: "it was for your sake, and at your suggestion, pretty Fanny Carpenter was removed to make

way for her—however, what's done cannot be undone. I was wrong, I believe, in setting my face against insurance—but it is past and gone, and I have nobody to blame for that but myself; and so what is to be, must be, and it is no use complaining."

And thus, softening as the pleasing libations which he poured, mellowed his grief and soothed his sorrows, Skinner and his friend remained talking over the state of their affairs, until a later hour than might have been expected, considering their journey, and its nature; however, at length they retired to rest—while Mr. Fuggleston lay revolving the extraordinary conduct of his wife; Frederick Benson was dreaming of Emma Gray; Emma Gray thinking of Frederick Benson; and honest Joseph was "dozing off" through the night air, towards Bristol, on the top of the heavy coach.

CHAPTER XII.

> Thou hast no friend—still on the worthlesse traine
> Thy kindnesse flowed, and still with scorne repayde,
> Even shee on whom thy favours heapt remaine,
> Even shee regards thee with a bosome dead
> To kindly passion.
>
> MICKLE.

It is as unnecessary as it would be disagreeable, to trace with any degree of minuteness the progress of Skinner and his companion towards the metropolis; their career was disgraceful, their enjoyments were vicious, and the conviction that they were so, acting upon the sense of shame, not yet extinct in Gervase, added to the constant torture inflicted by his recent loss, rendered the journey sufficiently disagreeable to the travellers to satisfy the greatest stickler for moral rewards, or poetical justice. It may be right, however, to say, that they reached

London in safety, and in the course of a week were established in lodgings in a respectable house in Jermyn-street, St. James's, of which residence they jointly took possession, under the common name of Skinner.

From this strangely paired couple we next turn to the rural lovers, whose approaching nuptials were now regularly announced, and who accordingly received the congratulations of all their acquaintances upon the happy event.

It was settled that in a fortnight from the Tuesday following Skinner's abdication, the marriage should take place: a precipitancy strongly advocated by Gray, who swore by the truth of the proverb, which says,

"Happy's the wooing
That's not long a doing."

He, who was a bit of a proverbialist, quoted all the saws of which he was master, touching slips between cups and lips, and birds in hand, and sundry others, to counteract the elder Miss Gray's chilling doctrine of delay, founded on the adage of "marrying in haste to repent at leisure," which her brother in his bantering way upset, by declaring that her repentance at

leisure arose from not being married at all; and so, after a somewhat lengthened discussion, they came to a resolution to have the marriage fixed for the day suggested by Benson, who intended to blend the wedding journey and the honey-moonship to London, with the professional progress which he was engaged to make, thus killing two birds with one stone, they would have all the *eclat* of starting on a tour, while he was fulfilling the arrangements upon business which he had made with his metropolitan patrons.

The time flew with others, though he lagged with them until the happy morning, when the fair bride, attended by Fanny Wagstaff and her family, the Grays, and one or two bosom friends, proceeded to the parish church, and was given by her uncle to the man of her choice, the beloved of her heart; and a less ostentatious or more quiet ceremony was never witnessed; the bells were rung, it is true, and some few had their corners of bride-cake; yet all was plain, modest, and humble, suited in every respect to the moderate pretensions of Benson, and the unassuming character of his happy bride.

It was in accordance with Emma's own

special desire that she was married before the legal question involving the disposal of the fifteen thousand pounds was agitated; for Skinner, who was one of the trustees, stoutly refused to give up the money, unless in strict compliance with the will of his friend, and had positively declared, that nothing short of the power of the Chancellor should compel him to do what he knew was directly in opposition to old Gray's intentions.

"Let me prove," said Emma, "if I am to marry Benson, that I do so without reference to the eventual disposal of my fortune; and for Benson's sake I beg it more earnestly, that those who know what inspired Mr. Skinner with so violent an affection for me, may be satisfied that Frederick's inducements to prefer me, are altogether of a different nature."

"You shall have it all your own way," said Gray; "your desire to maintain and uphold the character and respectability of your husband, does you honour, my child. With that feeling which I know you will always cherish, your future lives will be productive of nothing but harmony and happiness." And so they were married; and after a *dejeuner à la fourchette*—

they did not call it so—the happy couple started on the road to London, in a carriage of Gray's, which had not seen the light for many a day, amidst the fervent prayers and blessings of all who knew and loved them.

They had before the wedding received intelligence of the destruction of Bagsden, but they were not aware of Skinner's present residence: he had abstained from any personal correspondence; his solicitor had written to Gray, to announce his determination with respect to the trust money, and there for the present the matter rested; although it must be admitted, that Emma was not entirely free from solicitude about her former intended husband; knowing how intimately he had known, and how much he had been esteemed by her father.

It did not appear, she thought, either necessary, or as if it would be even right for her, to commence a correspondence with Skinner, by making inquiries about his loss. Gray had written to him, and directed his letter to the Taunton post office, in the expectation that it would most probably reach him in that neighbourhood; but whether the letter miscarried

or not, was not then ascertained; all that was known was, that no answer had been received.

Under these circumstances, it was quite by accident, that our two couple were domesticated at the same time in the metropolis, although in very different parts of it; for while Skinner and the lady were established in St. James's, Benson and his bride were located in St. Giles's: that is to say, in one of the rural streets, near Tottenham-court-road: to which, quiet, economy, country air, and a good light, had attracted the young artist, who in truth was so warmly received by the admirers of his art, that he began to doubt, whether he had not better fix himself in the "centre of every thing," and settle altogether in London or its neighbourhood.

But strange events were to occur: the fickleness of fortune, and the instability of all human affairs, were to be powerfully exemplified.

One day, Emma, who had remained at home during a long professional round of calls, which her kind and affectionate husband was making, was anxiously waiting his return, when a hurried, sudden, and extraordinary knocking at the street-door, aroused her from the placid state of attentive listening, in which she had some time been

reposing, and in a moment Frederick stood before her, labouring under an agitation, altogether incomprehensible, and so totally unlike any thing she had ever seen before, that her alarm was as great as her surprise.

"What *is* the matter, dearest Frederick?" said she, running towards him.

He caught her in his arms, and pressed her to his heart.

"We must thank God for it," said he, in a faltering accent. "I never told you—never should have owned my folly—but—now—now you must know it all."

"In mercy's sake, tell me what has happened," said Emma.

"You must prepare your gentle mind for a shock," said Benson.

"Gracious powers! something sad has happened at home——"

"No, no"—sobbed poor Frederick, who could hardly speak,—"it is joy—too much joy that you have to guard against—for your sake, for your dear sake, sweetest wife, it is that I rejoice, you who sacrificed a fortune for me—it seems like retributive justice. We are rich people, Emma— and it is our own faults

if, under Providence, we are not happy ones. A ticket which I bought in the lottery, which I never confessed—has been drawn a prize of thirty thousand pounds——"

"Is that the cause of this agitation?" said Emma—"for *my* sake is it you feel so delighted?—for *yours*, dearest Frederick, I am indeed most grateful — *I* wanted nothing more than we already possess to be the happiest of the happy."

"But consider, Emma," said the enraptured husband, "how your uncle and aunt will rejoice—all their cares and anxieties about you—all the doubts and hazards which depend upon the precarious success of art and genius, are at an end. We are rich—wealthy—opulent—wonderfully rich people."

And again he caught his lovely Emma to his heart, thinking that such a heap of treasure as thirty thousand pounds was indissoluble; and so, with their views and intentions, it really might be considered. Of one part of this happy affair, Frederick was wholly ignorant—he did not know to whom the ticket belonged, when it was offered for sale by the worthy cornchandler to whom Skinner handed it. Gervase was anxious

that his name should not transpire as the owner of it; and when he sent his civil landlord to "negociate it," bound him to secrecy as to the source whence he derived it. This circumstance hindered Benson from knowing, at present, that it had actually been the property of Skinner, and sold to him to save or rather make a little money, which, as far as the interests of all parties were concerned, was for the best; it deprived the happy event of the only disagreeable feeling which could accompany it, and which would have deeply wounded Emma's sensibility and delicacy; indeed, the chances are, that if she had been aware of the fact, she would have carried her notions of delicacy and propriety to the length of persuading Benson to return her treasure to the discarded Skinner.

This, however, was not to happen; and those only who have felt a burst of joy like theirs, can at all appreciate the delicious calm which followed the first development of the great success, and the happiness of the evening, which was passed by Frederick and Emma, in proposals and arrangements suitable to the exercise of their wealth, and consequent elevation in the scale of middling society.

It would seem almost profane, to suppose that the hand of Providence should be employed in directing the chances of what is considered a vicious game; but certain it is, that the unexpected and extraordinary acquisition of this fortune, at the moment when the devoted lovers had given up the advantages of wealth, for the purer joys of true affection, did seem to the good and grateful couple themselves something more than a "curious coincidence."

Skinner, in *his* career, seemed to go on in the descending scale, proportionately to the exaltation of the young people. A new and severe blow had fallen upon him, and one which, although, as it will be seen, was caused by his old principle of action, was heard of with the deepest regret by those who really cared more for him than he deserved they should, considering his conduct both before and after the marriage.

When Bagsden was destroyed, Skinner's heart was sorely and deeply wounded; and sleepless nights and wretched days followed the catastrophe. His mortification was not decreased by the reflection which came somewhat too late, that his misplaced economy had deprived him of that relief which the admirable

institution of insurance offices would for a most moderate charge have afforded him when the devastation took place; but still he had his main property secure—secured too in a manner unshakeable—on mortgage. Fifty-four thousand pounds on mortgage, for which, as I have before mentioned, by great skill and with infinite judgment he had obtained six per cent. in Ireland, and which, until the acres themselves should dissolve, would produce a constant, sure, and excellent income.

With this he consoled himself, and began to calculate how he should rebuild Bagsden; how raise funds, who were the cheapest builders in the neighbourhood, and so on; when, having written to the house where he received his interest, to remind them that it was some time over due, and not having received any answer, he made application to his solicitor (who was also actively engaged in maturing his answer to any bill which the Grays might think proper to file against him in respect of the fifteen thousand pounds,) directing him to state his intention of instituting proceedings to obtain the rents of the mortgaged estates, when, to his horror and amazement, his solicitor got an answer from the lawyers

of the other parties stating, that they had received notices from a person claiming under the entail, and until that case was decided, they were compelled to pay the rents into the Court of Chancery; adding to this positive statement of facts, an opinion founded upon the evidence, and their knowledge of the case, that the claimant in question had every prospect of ultimate success.

This was the *coup de grace:* the whole of his property—the savings of a careful parent's life—the accumulation of half a century—gone at a blow. The allurement of one per cent. more for his money, than he could have securely obtained in England, had induced him to vest his capital in this Irish mortgage, and caused the loss literally of every shilling he had in the world, beyond the loose cash actually in his possession.

"What on earth shall I do!" said Skinner to Amelrosa, after having explained the cause, the nature, and the extent of his loss; "a partial failure might be repaired; but this is a total demolition."

"My dear friend," said the lady, "small as the income may be, we can never starve, while I possess the annuity you have settled on me; besides which, I have my talents, which may be

exerted for our joint advantage, and then the fifteen thousand pounds——"

"Why," said Skinner, interrupting her, "the fifteen thousand pounds never can be mine, under any circumstances; all my struggle has been to prevent its falling into the hands of others; but the feeling is perhaps not over amiable, and I——"

"What!" cried the surprised dame, "if you had succeeded then in any defence of your conduct in Chancery, would you not have gained possession of the property?"

"Assuredly not," replied my hero, "I acted 'upon principle,' and ——"

"Principle, indeed!" said Amelrosa, "this seems no time to talk fine or big; I presume now you will give up your opposition?"

"Any thing for a quiet life," said Skinner, "if I could only see how we are to live."

"I repeat, there are my talents," said Amelrosa, "and the annuity to fall back upon."

"My dear soul," said Gervase, "of what annuity are you talking?—if you mean the hundred and fifty pounds a year of mine, that's gone—gone eternally—I have no funds left out of which to pay it."

"Gone!" screamed the actress.

"Yes—now don't faint, Amelrosa," said Skinner, "I'm half mad as it is; the sight of you in distress, will make me quite so."

"Faint, you fool, what should I faint about," said the dame; "so you have beggared yourself by your avarice and stinginess together, and have lured me away from my husband, and my profession, with your fine promises and vain pretences, and here I am linked to a man unable even to support me."

"Woman!" said Skinner, in a tone which if one human being on earth had cared for him, would have wrung that being's heart, "spare me this —I deceived nobody but myself—I held out no false pretences—all I said I possessed, I *did* possess—all I stated myself to be worth, I *was* worth—you should have shared it—let me have no reproaches, because I am suddenly overwhelmed with ruin."

"Reproaches—no, Mr. Skinner," said Mrs. Fuggleston, "you shall hear none of my reproaches, nor will I be spoken to, coarsely or unfeelingly—you have ruined—you have disgraced me! What satisfaction is it to me, to find that you have also ruined yourself—my re-

proaches, Sir, shall never annoy you, depend upon it;" saying which, she dashed theatrically into another apartment, leaving the oppressed Skinner in a stupor of grief and astonishment.

Skinner's reflections at this period of his life, were beyond description wretched—nor was his regret at all soothed or diminished by the harsh and unfeeling conduct of Amelrosa, in the hour of trial—yet perhaps he had, in a moment of irritation, spoken too harshly to her. What she had said was true; she had sacrificed all for him, and in short, his anxiety about her increased his own worry, and he sought her in her retirement, in hopes to heal the wound he had inflicted.

When he entered the room, anticipating the sight of the fair one extended on the bed, half drowned in tears, he was agreeably surprised to find her actively employed in packing up all her moveables in a large trunk, and placing other articles of property ready for depositing in a smaller one. Skinner saw what she was doing, and wondered; but contented himself by telling her, that he was going down to his solicitor, to endeavour to make some arrangment for present funds.

"And when shall you be back?" said Amelrosa.

"Before dinner time," said Skinner.

"Oh!" said the lady, "I thought, perhaps, we should be obliged to pack off at a minute's warning; it is of no use your trying to keep on these expensive lodgings if you have not any money, and I'm sure I haven't any to lend you——"

"We must hope for better days," said Skinner; and as his eyes filled with tears, he turned from her to conceal the bitterness of his feelings. "I shall be in by five," added he, as he left the room; "don't despair, my poor girl—things may mend—pray keep up your spirits—good bye."

And he quitted her.

The solicitor was at his chambers, and Gervase had a long but very unsatisfactory conversation with him. He was considerably in arrears with the house; for as "upon principle" he had sunk all his cash in this advantageous mortgage, he had been obliged to apply to his lawyer to advance him the hush money for Fuggleston. A dividend had been paid upon the debt of Hobbs, Stobbs, Bumble, and Davis, but the

lawyer had received it and carried it to account. There were some materials at Bagsden, and some part of the farming stock saved, which might fetch no inconsiderable sum; but the solicitor had sent down one of his young gentlemen to make arrangements, and an auctioneer had been employed, so that the proceeds would go to liquidate his claim upon my hero, although more law proceedings were in progress in that quarter to enforce the covenanted rebuilding. A small sum, however, was obtained for present use, and Skinner stepped homewards with fifty pounds in his pocket, as joyously as at another time he would have borne five thousand. It would, at all events, pay off his arrears at the lodgings —it would keep off the appearance of sudden change in the approach of distress, until Amelrosa, kindly sharing his adversity as she had partaken of his property, would exert those talents which first had won her lover, for their mutual advantage. She had herself suggested this; and he looked forward in the midst of wreck and ruin to a day's repose and consultation, from which new suggestions might arise, and new schemes be brought into a tangible shape for operation.

He reached his lodgings, and hastened up stairs to impart his plan to the partner of his existence, and encourage her, more perhaps than the truth would justify, in the prospect of ultimate success in the mortgage affair. On the table in the front drawing-room lay the remains of luncheon, of which Amelrosa had it appeared partaken, with her accustomed good appetite; but Amelrosa herself was not there. He knocked at the door of the adjoining room, which was the bed chamber—no answer—he opened the apartment, and found it untenanted; nor did it escape his observation that the trunks of his fair and devoted friend were gone too.

Returning to the drawing-room, he rang the bell; the mistress of the house herself appeared to answer it. Mrs. Skinner had desired luncheon, of which she had partaken; had then ordered a hackney coach to be called; and after having duly refreshed herself, had quitted the house in the vehicle, carrying with her, her two trunks.

"Gone?" said Skinner, "Mrs. Fuggleston gone?"

"Who, Sir?" said the lady of the house, "Mrs. who?"

"I mean," said Gervase, finding himself

caught, "I mean the lady who was here—Mrs. Skinner, if you choose it; I hardly know what I am saying."

"She left this note, Sir," continued the woman, "which she desired me to give you; and these two bills——"

"Good God!" said Skinner, throwing himself into an arm chair, "I did not expect this, I confess—leave the papers—thank you. I should like to be alone a little."

"I am afraid, Sir," said the woman of the house, "that you have been ill used by that lady."

"No, no," said Skinner, "I——do me the favour to let me be by myself for a short time. I will ring if I require any body."

The woman of the house did as Skinner desired her; and Gervase, overcome by his feelings, hid his face in his hands, and cried like a child.

The bills she had left were for finery and trumpery, from some milliners and dress-makers. The note ran thus:—

"It seems by your conduct to me under your present very embarrassing circumstances, that a separation from me would be agreeable to you. I have suffered much—undergone much for you;

but as you yourself seem to feel—I cannot but admit—the impossibility of living upon nothing, your own conscience may, perhaps, satisfy you with regard to your conduct towards me. In justice to myself, however, I must quit you. I shall always be glad to hear of you and of your better success in life; the two little accounts I leave with this, are for things which you wished me to buy; and, therefore, as I am quite poor enough, you will, I dare say, contrive to settle for them. You may rely upon hearing from me before long; and I wish you health and every happiness you can wish yourself.

"Your's, always truly,

"A. F."

Such a termination to such a connection, poor Gervase never could have calculated upon. The baseness of her nature, and the coldness of her heart, however, seared the wounds her cruelty inflicted; and instead of grief, and sorrow, and mortification, Skinner's mind was filled with anger that he had ever been the dupe of her professions, or that, above all, having once got quit of her, he should in a moment of irritation a second time have committed himself, and assumed the chain of such a tyrant.

And here, at forty-six, or so, stood the undone Gervase Skinner—gradually sunk in the world by the load of carefulness with which he had chosen to burthen himself—the victim of misplaced economy, and miscalculated prudence. In the midst of his difficulties, however, he resolved upon quitting his lodgings on the following day, of abandoning all opposition to the disposal of Emma's fortune, and of endeavouring to make peace with all the world; and, if possible, getting over into Ireland, where perhaps his presence and personal investigation might be of use in the progress of the mortgage affair; and where, at all events, his sudden fall in life might not be so strikingly conspicuous as in the neighbourhood where he had before resided in comfort, affluence, and respectability.

On the instant he returned to his solicitor, (who had latterly suspected the existence of the connection between his client and some lady, whom he knew not), and communicated the intentions he had formed of giving up the litigation about the trust money, and retiring to the "green isle"—measures which, although one of them might militate against his professional interests, the lawyer highly approved—a con-

currence probably in some degree promoted by the conviction that whatever costs the squire might incur, he had not sufficient property left to render the payment of them over certain.

It was in this second visit he heard, that in the interval between that and his first, his solicitor had received a call from Mr. Frederick Benson on the subject of the proceedings on the will, announcing that Mr. Gray would himself be in town in a day or two; that he had inquired where Mr. Skinner resided, and had been told; having also expressed his anxiety that all their matters should come to an amicable termination.

The solicitor upon this occasion had stated the exact nature of Skinner's circumstances; that his misfortune was overwhelming, and that he had himself given up all hopes of relief; indeed, the last remnant of his former comforts had that day been cut off, and his faithful servant Joseph dismissed, after a servitude from childhood.

The thoughts of Skinner's embarrassment turned all Benson's feelings of anger or soreness against him into compassion and anxiety to be of service to him; and the disposition which the solicitor admitted to exist, on his part, of with-

drawing his opposition to Emma's enjoyment of her fortune, to which his former economy had luckily given him no claim, strengthened his wish to come to some arrangement with his fond wife to repay evil with good, and endeavour to secure something like comfort for their former foe.

It was not, however, until Benson discovered that the lucky ticket which had so nobly enriched them, had once been Skinners', that he felt it a *duty* to exert himself in his behalf. But having found out that circumstance from a communi-ation with the Grays, he stated his feelings to Emma, who most readily seized the suggestion, and they determined, in their own way, to make the Squire comfortable.

Their scheme, however, required some little time for arrangement; and in the meanwhile, Skinner left Jermyn Street, and returned to his old quarters at the Hummums, to which place he repaired full of painful recollections, with a broken fortune, a wounded spirit, and the prospect of eventual beggary—and yet, full of all those feelings, his first evening's walk from his resting place was up the dirty court in which the ruin of his respectability had been wrought,

and his first almost involuntary act, to stop and gaze at the windows of that room where he was once welcomed with the ardour of affection and the warmth of friendship; the then occupiers of which, were now separated, on his account, each having in turn discarded and despised him.

If those who yet unstained by crime, were to know the pangs caused by the recollection of evil deeds, they would, for their own sakes, shun the paths of vice and profligacy, however gay the scenes to which they lead—however exquisite the joys which pursuing them secures. An age of heartless pleasure would be sadly purchased by one hour of sorrow such as poor Skinner felt that night.

On that same night the popular Mrs. Fuggleston commenced an engagement at a Provincial Theatre, with Little Pickle, and Mrs. Crichton, going through all the incidental hornpipes, fireworks, Muscovy ducks, sucking-pigs, knife-grinders, manual and platoon exercises, aye! pewter plates, and all! with the most powerful effect and the most rapturous applause.

The arrangements made by the Bensons were not completed until the end of the week, by which time the old Grays had arrived; and Gray,

by the wish of the artist, proceeded in search of the squire; but by one of those coincidences, which, considering the locality, cannot be considered very curious indeed, they encountered the said squire in Covent-Garden, just as they were approaching his residence. He seemed startled at the meeting, and at first uncertain whether he should be recognized by his former friends; a moment, however, settled that business.

"Skinner, your hand," said old Gray, "how are you, my fine fellow?"

"Gray," said Gervase, "I am glad to meet you; but I conclude you know my circumstances —Mr. Benson, if you will give me your hand I shall be too happy; my folly I am quite awake to—and even yet, perhaps, you are ignorant of its extent."

Benson immediately gave him his hand, and a welcome shake into the bargain.

"Why, for the matter of that," said Gray, "I fancy the people in our city are pretty well enlightened upon that topic; but we don't want to talk on what is past, especially out here, in the street. Benson has a word or two to say to you from Emma."

"I have, Mr. Skinner," said Frederick; "I

am deputed to invite you to come and stay with us, and my honoured friend here, and his sister, at a small cottage we have got, within five or six miles of town. The fresh air and quiet will do you good; for, to tell you the truth, you are not looking *too* well."

"Worry of mind, Sir," said Skinner, "and that too, of a mind not used to worry. I should be happy to accept your invitation, but—I am on the eve of starting for Ireland, to endeavour to look after the wreck of my fortune."

"You can go to Ireland a week or two later," said old Gray,—"oblige the young people,—a perfect reconciliation is what Emma, for her poor father's sake, is anxious to bring about, and as you have hoisted the olive branch, why let us perfect the affair, and come to her to day."

"We will take you there," said Benson, "at least I can drive you down. You can stow away such things as you want, in my dennet, and my uncle and the ladies will go in the close carriage. Come, come, we will take no refusal. I'll call at your hotel at three."

"Mr. Benson," said Skinner, "into a heart half broken as mine is, such words of kindness

sink deep. And after the toils and turmoils of an unsettled and most unprofitable life, the prospect of a return to the friends of our early days, to the calm comforts of domestic society, and the peaceful attractions of a virtuous fire-side, is too cheering to be rejected. Professions, now I have nothing left, would be idle; but I most thankfully accept your bidding, and bless you both for your forgiveness and consideration.

"No credit to us—no credit to us!" cried old Gray, "it's all little Emmy—all that child's own doing—but people are listening; we must not make an exhibition of our feelings in the open streets. At three, Frederick shall call, and, please the pigs, Skinner, we'll have a happy day of it."

Thus they parted for a time, and Skinner, whose heart was really softened by misfortune, felt comparatively comfortable, in the prospect of his country jaunt, the cheapness of which, however, now that he had nothing left, did not, in the smallest degree, charm him; with the possession of the heap, had gone the desire for accumulation. He saw all his schemes rendered abortive, all his plans unsuccessful, and a shil-

ling, when he had but twenty left, was not by a twentieth part as valuable, in his calculation, as it would have been when he had thousands in his coffers.

Three o'clock arrived, and with it Benson and his dennet, and in less than an hour my hero was ushered into a small, yet extremely pretty cottage, sweetly situated in the neighbourhood of one of the most sequestered villages within the sphere of London, the name of which must remain a secret, lest I should betray my friend; and there, in its snug and comfortable drawing-room, elegantly, yet unostentatiously furnished, was Skinner, the poor Skinner, re-introduced to his old connexions, and his scornful Emma, whose grace of manner, and kindness of address in receiving, as mistress of the house, the friend—the esteemed friend of her poor father—called forth the silent, but deep-felt admiration of her devoted husband, who watched, with tears of pleasure, the assiduous kindness of his beloved wife to one, whose conduct towards her, all now forgotten, had been, to say the least of it, little calculated to engender affection or excite esteem. But, as on the one hand, charity covers a multitude of sins; so,

Emma, nearly overcome by the task she had undertaken, leant for support on her dear Frederick.

"It is not our house, Mr. Skinner," said she, "—it is yours;—you must forgive the little deception we have practised on you for the sake of a surprise. Fortune has showered its blessings upon us just at the moment when she has frowned on you. If I offended you in rejecting your hand, here is the culprit who must answer for the crime," turning to her husband; "but although I refused the lover, I hope I may retain the friend—the esteemed friend too of my beloved parent—whose intentions were, that that friend should be the sharer of his daughter's fortunes. It is too late to-night to enter into details and explanations. Frederick and myself have fitted up this small, yet cheerful home, for you; and you will find that we have not forgotten to furnish the means of maintaining it agreeably."

"Can this be possible?" said Skinner. "Am I snatched from ruin, penury, poverty—and sheltered by the hand of her whose merits——"

"Don't compliment the child," said old Gray, "she is a good girl, but you will make her vain."

"It is right," said Emma, "that you should

see your establishment before we leave you," saying which, the kind-hearted girl rang the bell, and "Mr. Skinner's servants" presented themselves in the shape of his own old original Bagsden housekeeper, and Joseph, the faithful heir-loom of the place.

"Now," said old Gray, "it is getting late; there you have 'em all snug and comfortable about you, and to-morrow we'll come down and see you when you are a little more settled."

"What am I to say?" said Skinner; "how can I confess my feelings?"

"Tell us, Sir," said Frederick, "that you are happy, and you make us so."

Skinner—as indeed he frequently was, when he was much gratified—was completely overpowered, and it all seemed like a dream to him when they clustered round him to take leave of him for the night.

"How happy I be, Zur," said honest Joseph, as he lighted the party out, "to zee my master zeemingly settled here after all his turmoils and troubles."

"Yes," said old Gray, "what a rich man he might have been, Joseph, if he had not always been afraid of being poor."

'Zo he would, zure enough," said Joseph,

"but he all along been what the folks call PENNY WISE AND POUND FOOLISH, and there's an end on't."

It may perhaps be necessary to say, in conclusion, that the generosity of Emma Gray eventually met its reward—that Skinner, after great difficulty, recovered his property, which she is to inherit hereafter—and that, warned by the ill success of his mistaken economy, Gervase has become a happy and not illiberal man—that Mrs. Fuggleston, when apprized of his restoration to competence, endeavoured to enforce the annuity, of which mention has been before made, but in vain—and that the young folks, blessed with every thing this world can afford, are living a life of happiness and content; the amiable young artist adding to his domestic exhibition, at least one family likeness per annum.

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